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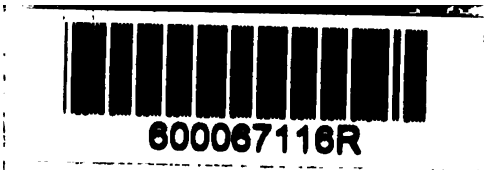
On Foreign Soil

AUTHOR OF

"Amico's Little Girl"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ON FOREIGN SOIL.

A NOVEL.

BY

M. MONTGOMERY CAMPBELL,

AUTHOR OF 'AMICO'S LITTLE GIRL,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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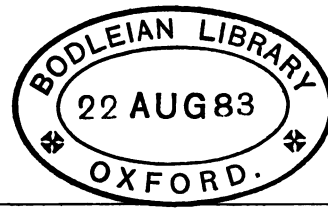

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ON FOREIGN SOIL.

CHAPTER I.

MAKING PLANS.

AND how had it come to pass, that the icy grasp of death had been so suddenly laid on the genial owner of Marley Priory, causing him to lie cold and still upstairs on the very day on which it had been expected that he would be seen leaning on his stick, and, perhaps, aided by Dick Stapeleton's

strong young arm, making his way, with a kindly word for all, amongst the joyous throng that filled his grounds?

This was how it had been.

Early that morning, his servant, on coming to his dressing-room door, heard the thud of a heavy fall, and hurrying in found the squire stretched completely unconscious on the floor.

The old man lived for more than an hour after this seizure; but never spoke again.

The Wednesley doctor, who came at once, said Mr Marley's state of health had led him to expect that this would occur sooner or later; undoubtedly, however, a telegram, which lay open on the dressing-table, and had arrived early that morning, must have hurried on the sad

event, by dealing the invalid a blow against which his shattered health could not bear up.

It contained a message from Messrs Garrett & Clerk, the family solicitors, and ran as follows :—

'We regret to state we have received full confirmation of the rumour.'

What did this imply ?

It meant that for the last fortnight a terrible weight had been preying on the squire's mind, of which he had spoken to no one, not excepting his wife.

To be brief, it had come to his knowledge that, contrary to what had always been believed by the family, his disreputable elder brother, of whom mention has been made in an earlier chapter, had married and left a son—at least a man declaring

himself to be so—claimed the Marley heritage for his own.

The poor old squire could not bring himself to give credit to this.

At first he treated it as an idle report, wholly void of foundation. Surely Herbert, and no other, his own clever, gentleman-like son, not some strolling adventurer, was heir to the grand old house where he had dwelt from childhood, and the broad acres which surrounded it.

Then, after a while, he told himself the thing was absurd, preposterous.

It had become the fashionable imposture to impersonate the rightful owner of some great property. One fellow had been successful in puzzling the public for a considerable length of time, and others thought they might do like-

wise. There was so much excitement in it, and, if successful, the prize amply compensated for any fears of detection previously endured.

But that dire telegram confirmed the report, and doubtless the next post would bring further details.

It may be as well to inform the reader at once that it was all true; for with all the litigation which followed, these pages have nothing to do.

This is the story rather of the inner life of a man and woman than of the mere outward circumstances of their existence, and is certainly not a sensational novel; or, we might find ample material for chapter after chapter of exciting reading in the account of that great trial.

We have, here, above all to do with

Herbert Marley; and so, ere passing on to other things, it must be stated that the case went against him; and Marley Priory passed into the hands of his cousin, a Mexican planter, who had come to England with pockets well lined with gold to pay the possible costs of the lawsuit, by which he hoped to become owner of the land from which his father, the heir, had fled in shame and fear. To any whom it may comfort, I am happy to be able to give the assurance that the day will probably come when his early home may revert to Herbert; for the planter is a childless widower, and his health, which has suffered from the rough life he led in the south, does not give promise of his attaining to a great age.

To the outside world, to the Stapeletons,

to his mother, to Herbert himself, who was, of course, summoned home at once on his father's death, the immediate cause of Squire Marley's unexpected decease seemed a grievous misfortune.

Yet, if we follow Herbert through the next few years of his life, we may learn to think it the best thing that ever happened to him.

He was little fit to fill his father's place at once; and this sudden loss of fortune, which necessitated his buckling to and acting for his mother and himself, in a way which had never been needful before, was, perhaps, the great shock of which Richard Marley had said he thought would have to come to 'show if there were any stuff in the lad.'

He was greatly overcome at his father's

death, and reproached himself for not having stayed at home instead of going to Germany; but he had not had any idea of the precarious state of the squire's health, his mother having purposely kept it from him. She, perhaps rather weakly, dreaded the effect of the news on her darling.

When death had laid her husband low, Mrs Marley gave way to her grief, in a degree that those accustomed to her usual, frigid manner did not expect; and Blanche was the only person she would receive during the sad week preceding the funeral. Her behaviour then, and during the trying time that followed, was not surprising to a close observer of character like Blanche Stapeleton, though both her weakness and strength surprised the outside world.

It was the various kinds of pride in her character, which caused her to act as she did. Haughty and reserved as she had always seemed, she had not really so far acquired, or, perhaps, had the opportunity for gaining, much power for bearing and suffering.

She had loved her husband, though she had scarcely let it appear so, and the suddenness and manner of his death giving no opportunity for mutual interchange of last words, wrung her heart with anguish at the thought of lost opportunities, and laid bare the weakness of her soul.

On the other hand, she met the reverses of fortune which came upon her, with a composure few would have foretold in her; for she had always been held to be the proudest woman in the county, to

whom it would be the severest of blows to be brought down from her position.

This was a fallacy.

Her pride, whether we hold it to savour most of virtue or of vice, was no vulgar belief in wealth and the advantages it brought; but was pride of race.

Born a lady, descended on the one side from Scottish royalty, on the other being the daughter of a baronet of the earliest creation and the longest of pedigrees, she held that the acquisition or loss of money could make no difference to her, and that if she were forced to retire to the humblest lodging, with a maid-of-all-work to wait on her, instead of her present large number of well-trained domestics, she still would be what no millionaire *parvenu's* wife or widow could ever be; and this

feeling made her receive all her old acquaintances without a vestige of false shame. Her brother, Sir William Challenger, offered her a home in his family, that her son might thus be freer to make his own way in the world, as it had become needful for him to do; but Herbert and she declined to part. Each felt that they were the nearest left to each other, and would therefore share poverty or difficulties alike.

Anything was better than being parted.

Mrs Marley had come into some money, left her by her godmother; it would have been enough for them both to live on in a humble way; and she said to Herbert,—

We can manage on my income, with great economy, though we shall have to do without everything, almost, to which

we have been accustomed. Yet it does not matter much, as long as we have each other.'

In answer to this, the young man put his arm round her, and said,—

'No, no, mother dear. You must let me work for you. It is better for me not to be idle; and I could not be happy feeling I was living at your expense, especially when you have so little for yourself.'

Then came the question: what was he to do?

It was hard to answer; and so Sir William Challenger and Colonel Stapeleton thought and declared very emphatically.

Winter had once more cast its snowy mantle over the earth, and by that time it had become clear that the celebrated case of Marley *versus* Marley, which just

then filled several columns of the daily papers, would be given against those then in possession of the estates; and, therefore, Sir William Challenger, as the late squire's brother-in-law and executor, and Colonel Stapeleton, as his oldest friend, with the exception of the monsignor, who declined to come forward, had been called into consultation with Herbert about his future.

Seated round the fire in the old hall, they discussed matters. Let us, therefore, give a farewell look to this favourite resort of the Marley family, for we shall not have occasion to visit it again ere the present occupants have gone forth from it to give place to a stranger.

A fire, made of roots from giant veterans which once graced the park, burns brightly

on the hearth, casting its fitful light on the three men ranged in front of it, and sometimes illumining the grim figures of the carved warriors, who stand sentinel at either side.

Blunder lies stretched on the rug at his master's feet; rare flowers fill the many vases and bowls which adorn the hall, and altogether it looks *achingly* like what it did that day, on which we first saw it and Blanche.

So Herbert, at least, thinks, and it makes him a little absent every now and then, though he tries to listen to what his uncle and Colonel Stapeleton have to say. Yes, his heart is still true to his old love, though he knows the course he has entered on has raised up an insuperable barrier between them, and

this, whilst it has not gone so far as to change his convictions, has acted as a greater check on him than he himself is aware; but for it he might have been dragged ere then into socialistic schemes; as it is, he has rather drawn back from his former companions.

His feelings towards Gretchen von Herberstein had never been warmer than those he cherished towards any other pleasant acquaintance. He had not really seen much of the Herbersteins at Wiesbaden; only, as things often do occur, it had happened that Captain Craufurd had met him on each occasion on which he was in their society.

'H'm,' said Sir William, smoothing out the copy of the 'Times' which lay on his knee, 'if you could make up your mind

to go out to the colonies, Herbert, and leave your mother in my charge, she should be made thoroughly comfortable, and you might do better for yourself than by getting some clerkship at home, which seems to me the only alternative.'

'I quite agree with you,' put in Colonel Stapeleton. 'Herbert is scarcely qualified for any of the professions.'

He, concerning whom these remarks were made, had let his thoughts wander off to the evening when Blanche had sung 'Cleansing Fires' to his accompaniment. It seemed to him as if he could hear the sound of her voice as she came to the lines—

'Beat on true heart for ever;
Shine bright, strong golden chain,
And bless the cleansing fire,
And the furnace of living pain.'

And as it all came back to him, he felt the beauty of the thoughts expressed in the poem, and wondered, in a vague sort of way, if he might yet learn 'to bless the cleansing fires,' and be able to find his way back again to her who had sung this.

But he must thrust these musings aside, for the present at least. There was Colonel Stapeleton scanning him curiously as if to read his thoughts, and his uncle, already impatient at receiving no reply, remarking,—

'Well, Herbert, you seem in no hurry to answer.'

'I beg your pardon, Uncle William, my ideas have a bad habit of straying away from the subject in hand. However, I must tell you my mind is made

up not to part with my mother, and I could not ask her to accompany me to the colonies.'

'Well, my dear fellow, I really don't see what you are to do at home.'

'Oh, I have some powers, that I might possibly turn to account.'

'I don't see it. Authorship and amateur painting, and all that sort of thing, could serve as very pleasant amusements when money was of no importance to you; but now—'

'Yes, now that is all different. I know that, uncle.'

'Very different,' emphasised Colonel Stapeleton, who, happening to have no suggestions of his own to make, thought well to side with each sentiment uttered by the baronet. For his own part, he

would have been glad enough if Herbert could have been prevailed upon to try his luck in the colonies. Knowing what a generous-minded woman his daughter was, he had already begun to fear—though Blanche had so far given him no reason to suppose so—that the very reverses young Marley had met with might lead her to look once more on him with favour; and as things had turned out, Colonel Stapeleton was not the man to smile on such a notion. Poverty and loss of position were far more serious faults in his eyes than any peculiar views about religion.

Sir William went on to say,—

'And then, Herbert, though I am one of those who think it a very delicate matter to speak to a man about his opinions on sacred subjects; yet I feel

bound to say, as this concerns my sister, that it would not be seemly for you to keep up your connection with the free-thinking set I hear you have lately taken up with, whilst living under the same roof as your mother.

'When you were *en garçon*, all that was less important. Yet, I suppose, if you tried to make your way in literature, that is the line you would pursue, and, in consequence, would always be having men of that odious Morton's stamp to see you.

'It would not do at all,—not at all.

'I don't like free-thinking in a man; but it is positively indecent in a woman, positively indecent, and therefore not to be thrust upon your mother.'

Having delivered himself of this speech,

the honest man felt relieved. He had been brought up a strict Conservative and moderately low Churchman, and had never been troubled with political or religious doubts, nor could he tolerate them in others.

'Believe me, my mother shall suffer no inconvenience in that way. I have been thinking this over,' Herbert replied, 'and it seems to me there is yet another way open for me to earn an income. It is by music.'

'My dear fellow!' Sir William looked at his nephew as if he needed no further proof of his having gone mad. He held music in supreme contempt, excepting as something to amuse the ladies; to him it was no pleasanter than any other noise; and his dull ears were slow to detect the

difference between the Old Hundredth and God Save the Queen.

'My dear fellow! you surely don't think of taking to fiddling or anything of that sort? The next we should hear of, would be your letting your hair grow long, like a German musician, and going about to play at parties.'

'Not quite that, Uncle William.' Herbert could not help smiling at the vision conjured up by his horrified relation. 'The organ, you know, is my favourite instrument, and I might perhaps be able to get an appointment somewhere as organist.'

'You might, but—' Sir William caressed his whiskers hesitatingly, 'but that would be playing for churches, and—'

'And you think no parson would take

me. I am quite of your opinion; and I don't think it would suit me, even if one could be induced to do so. Then, excepting at some well-known church or cathedral, the pay would be so small. No, Uncle William, I am hoping to get an appointment at a concert-hall in some large town, where there would be plenty of work and interests. It would be altogether more to my mind.

'Only such appointments are not easy to get, being posts of considerable importance. I should have to trust to making a good impression by my musical degree and playing; if a place of that sort were thrown open for competition, and I could take my trial with others'.

This sounded more reassuring, and though not convinced, Sir William felt

his nephew's plan might be less wild than it had at first appeared to him. However, whatever was to be done had to be done quickly, that Mrs Marley and her son might have their future plans matured by the time the verdict at the trial should be given against them, which was expected shortly to occur.

CHAPTER II.

A MUSICAL COMPETITION.

HERBERT had already made inquiries about a post as organist; and though he heard of several vacancies in different parts of England, the place which he felt would suit him best was close by; in short, the only drawback, if he proved the successful candidate, lay in its being so near his old home. It was at Denesbury, where the Victoria Hall had been recently erected at great cost for the purpose of giving concerts of

all kinds, and the organ there was one of the finest in the United Kingdom. The place of organist was still open to competition, and the committee in whose hands the appointment rested, whilst offering a large salary, would only elect a first-rate musician, one who would take an interest in all that went on, and draw crowds by his playing.

Herbert was eager for the post, but full of fears as to whether, never having filled one before, he had any chance of being accepted.

Sir William thought the proximity to the Priory, and the fact of Denesbury being the Marleys' county town, a very serious drawback. But his sister declared herself ready to go anywhere with her son; and if Denesbury proved the

most eligible place, to Denesbury she would go.

So, despite of Sir William's opposition to the plan, backed by Colonel Stapeleton, the idea was considered a good one by the parties it most nearly concerned, and the only doubt remaining, was whether Herbert would be accepted.

He offered himself to the committee, and in course of time received a printed notice to the effect that his name had been placed on the list of candidates, and that his presence would be required at Denesbury on such a day. This turned out to be the one following that on which the news reached the Marleys, telling how the trial, involving the loss of all the fair lands of their forefathers, had gone against them. Herbert had been in London

watching the proceedings, and only returned to the Priory by a late train.

All this might have flurried and made him anxious; but it did not, or if it did, he controlled himself well. His sense of responsibility stirred him into action. He was about to try for a home to which to bring his mother, and a fresh feeling of manly resolution came over him.

Then Blanche, too,—for his thoughts would still always turn to her,—might be pleased when she learnt that he was seeking to do his part actively in this working world.

On the afternoon of the momentous day, he presented himself at the hour named in the notice, sent him by the committee, in the large concert-room of the Victoria Hall.

Most of the competitors were already assembled. Some he knew by sight as men of great musical reputation; some were bearded, elderly, and wore spectacles; some affected the long hair, of which his uncle had spoken so slightingly; one, as a reward for his services in the presence of royalty, had been made Civil Commander of the Bath; all looked years older than himself, and not a few turned with unconcealed surprise to look at this youthful, smooth-faced candidate who ventured to throw down the gauntlet to men of their knowledge and experience.

The committee took their places. The first on the list of competitors seated himself at the organ.

Besides the gentlemen of the committee,

a select and specially-invited audience was present.

There was a large party from the Deanery, and the bishop had come with a few musical friends.

Added to these were the local magnates, and many persons whose opinion was held to be of weight.

Denesbury people were appreciative listeners, and considered themselves good critics.

The bishop settled into a listening attitude, and the player began. He possessed skill and precision; every note received its due value; the runs showed much execution.

A slight murmur of approval greeted the close of his performance; and so likewise with several candidates, who followed in their turn.

Denesbury was pleased, but not overwhelmed. Such playing had been heard there before. The cathedral organist could have held his own against any, who had so far been heard.

And now the time had arrived for Herbert to be put on his trial. As he passed up through the group of candidates, sundry comments were made on him in undertones by the audience. All, of course, knew him by sight, many knew him personally.

There were a few exclamations of surprise. It had not been made public, that he was about to try for the post.

Sympathy with his changed fortunes, and affection for the memory of his father, who had been generally beloved and respected, made their hearts go with

him. Of himself they knew comparatively little. Since reaching manhood he had been so much away from home, that even rumours of his unorthodox opinions had only come to the ears of a few. Of his powers as a musician still less even was known. He had always been shy and modest about them. One or two persons 'had heard he was musical,' many did not even know so much. Therefore the heads of the majority could not go with their hearts. Though all wished him success, it seemed almost preposterous, that he should venture to measure himself with some of the best organists of the day.

A fatherly smile irradiated the placid features of the bishop.

The dean put up his eye-glass, knit

his brows, and put on a critical look. He thought himself a judge of music, sacred or classical particularly, and he looked on the organ as his province, being, as it is, the special instrument used for the services of the church.

Herbert began.

Bach, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn were the composers from whom he made a selection. His rendering of them surpassed anything done by his predecessors.

Then he paused.

Each candidate was required to play a composition of his own; and great had been the variety displayed, ranging from the most sober fugue to the wildest mountain-storm piece.

Herbert had scarcely been able to make

up his mind beforehand as to which of his own pieces he should play. And now, setting aside all his previous ideas, he let his fancy range freely, and, after a short prelude, played through, with great feeling, the simple melody to which he had set 'Cleansing Fires.' Then, yielding to the inspiration of the moment, he followed out the train of thought, till he forgot the committee, the audience, the fact of being on his trial, and his heart and mind were full only of Blanche, of that night when she had last sung to him, of their ultimate separation, and of the anguish it had caused him.

He had told his betrothed, in that far away happy past, how one could tell out all one's thoughts to the organ; and he

did it now. His whole soul went out in music, and as he played there stole over him a fresh feeling of hope, he had not known till then; and, as in a vision, he saw Blanche at his side as she stood, fair and pure, that night, her clear voice singing of 'blessing the cleansing fires, and the furnace of living pain.'

And then the song done, there were her spoken words for himself alone. 'Don't forget it; I sang it for you.' No one present was able to listen unmoved.

When the last note had died away, the bishop's fatherly smile of approval had long since given way to an expression of rapt attention; and the dean's critical look had changed to profound amazement.

'A genius; indeed a genius,' that eccle-

siastical dignitary said to a lady at his side. 'How is it possible this star has been hidden from us so long? I would give anything to have him for the cathedral.'

The lady happened to be the wife of a brother officer and particular friend of Captain Craufurd's, and had learnt more from him about Herbert than the dean knew; so being always only too ready with her tongue, she said,—

'Oh, he would never do for the cathedral. You need not regret him. I know on good authority that Mr Marley is an atheist, and gives public and most violent expression to his views.'

'An atheist? my dear lady, I am distressed indeed to hear it. I hope, despite his undoubted talent, the committee will

reject him. It would be such a bad example for the town.'

Whilst the dean was engaged in saying this, the bishop, in blissful ignorance of Herbert's opinions, was already telling one of the committee what a wonderful gift he considered Mr Marley possessed; and how important he thought it that his services should be secured for the concert-hall.

'I consider that his filling the post of organist here will materially increase the value of the shares, besides being a means of public good. Music of the right sort I always hold to be such an important factor in the education of the people,' his lordship observed. 'In short, Mr Tomkins, if my opinion is of any value to you, let your choice fall by all means on this remarkable young man.'

CHAPTER III.

SETTING TO WORK.

HERBERT found a dwelling for his mother at about a mile's distance from Denesbury; the Cottage it was called, and in truth was no more, being a low, old-fashioned, creeper-covered red brick house, with a field and small garden, not comfortable in all respects, and lacking many modern improvements, but still pleasanter in Mrs Marley's eyes than any abode in the town itself could have been. Accustomed, as she al-

ways was, to air and space, a house such as she could afford in her poverty in the narrow, ill-paved streets of Denesbury would have been insupportable to her; and the new, fashionable quarter was expensive. Besides, she preferred rustics for neighbours to the society of the *nouveaux-riches*, who made up the largest part of Denesbury residents.

In this new home, she settled down with the determination not to attempt anything above her means; but at the same time to do all in her power to make Herbert comfortable, and contrive little devices to save him from missing the luxuries, he had been used to all his life.

Of course, she herself missed her horses to ride, her daily drives in her easy barouche, with the highest pair of steppers

in the county, and the visitors and homage of the time, when she was the wife of the most popular wealthy squire for many miles round; but she never spoke of this, and only showed it by a few additional wrinkles, and the deepening of the hard lines in her face.

To the outside world, she seemed, if anything, a little haughtier and more reserved than before; to her son she was, if possible, more tender, more devoted than ever; and there came long hours when all her love was needed to make her patient.

There comes a time in most friendships, when patience almost superhuman is needed on the one side—that the weary time may be tided over, and the friendship saved. Such a time arrived for Adelaide Marley.

She and Herbert were friends, in a degree which is rare between mother and son; so great was the sympathy between them, and the power of expressing their thoughts to each other. As a rule, the most open communication was theirs; if necessary, 'the severest truth;' always the 'most exemplary faithfulness;' and these, an old writer tells us, are all necessary ingredients to the friendships of 'brave men and women.'

When Herbert first received the appointment at the Victoria Hall, he took up his work with such zeal, and it so fully occupied his time, that his spirits rose considerably; and day after day he went home to his mother, looking bright and cheerful, ready to tell of this concert or that musical festival, and of his share in all.

After a while, however, as the novelty died away, though he did his duties as organist as thoroughly, Mrs Marley thought him depressed. He came back for weeks together looking gloomy, at times almost sullen; and whilst keeping up enough heart to do his work, seemed to find it beyond his powers to smile back at his mother's loving words. Any active duty he performed punctually; for any sudden call, he was ready; but to take any share in brightening their home life appeared more than he was able for.

To keep aloof from her son, to repress all the sympathy, which, filling her heart, was so ready to rise to her lips; for this hard task—how hard only those who have tried it know—Mrs Marley nerved herself. Many, making a like attempt, have

failed miserably, lacking strength of purpose and selflessness to carry them through; but this woman, judged to be so cold and proud, persevered to the end, upheld by her single-hearted love for her child, and a nobility of character, for which a repelling manner caused none, if we except Herbert, to give her credit. And she had her reward; she gained her son. It was particularly difficult, because such a line of conduct had never been required of her before. The late squire's genial, outspoken nature had not needed it, and Herbert had never shown himself to her before in anything approaching to this taciturn, forbidding state of mind. All the time during the estrangement from Blanche and his avowal of his freethinking views, though grieving for him inwardly,

and defending him outwardly, she had always found him ready to talk to her, and to listen unresentfully to her pleadings, though holding to his own opinions, that he would reconsider the step he was taking.

For a while, after first becoming connected with Mr Morton and others of a like mind, he had absented himself from public worship, because this seemed to be necessary, if he wished to be looked upon as having the courage of his opinions.

After a time, however, to please his mother, he had accompanied her to church, saying that he did not consider that going as a listener committed him to anything, and, indeed, to be truly liberal one must hear all sides. This habit he continued

to keep up, when they left the Priory for their cottage home near Denesbury.

The church which, as it happened to be the nearest, they usually attended, was in the hands of a clergyman remarkable for nothing but prosiness; and Herbert, as he dutifully sat out the sermon, was not surprised at seeing the school-children in the gallery amusing themselves by sly attempts at catching flies whenever the teachers' eyes were not upon them, and at beholding the old women in the free seats nodding over their prayer-books. Yet, he continued this act of filial devotion, even when the unsociable fit above described came over him.

What the cause of this change in him was, I must try, in part at least, to tell my reader; for to understand, in its entirety,

the state of mind of another, much more to be able to describe it in all its details, when it involves such perplexities and contradictions as Herbert's then did, no candid writer will claim to be capable. Indeed, any attempt at this would end in vague and meaningless verbosity.

When he had first come to Denesbury, the many duties of his post at the Victoria Hall had made it impossible for him to continue his connection with the 'Veritas' magazine and the various promulgators of the views it chiefly propounded. Attending their meetings and corresponding frequently with them was out of the question; time was wholly lacking for this, and as to receiving them at his house, we know he had promised his uncle not to do it, for his mother's sake. At first he

felt sorry about it; but after a while, under the wholesome influence of regular work, he grew glad. It even began to dawn upon him that perhaps after all he had been hasty in acting, as he had done at Oxford; and that but for Mr Morton's flattery just at a time when his own want of thoroughness had overturned his religious convictions, much might have been different.

When a young man begins to acknowledge to himself that vanity has had a share in his conduct, there are hopes of his breaking off from much that is bad; when, added to this, there is somewhere still hid away in his heart an honest love for a good woman, there is no saying how greatly he may change for the better. And these two agencies were at work in

Herbert Marley. He saw he had been led away by the pleasant feeling, that he was of importance in swaying people's opinions; and he was thoroughly true to Blanche Stapeleton.

On the other hand, there were two counter influences at work in him. These lay in the thought that he could not go back to the belief he had once held, and in considering it as impossible (even had his orthodoxy been unimpeachable) to ask the hand of the girl, whose family had been willing enough that it should be bestowed upon him as heir of Marley Priory, now that he had become a poor man. These two subtle forms of pride, clothed as they were in the highly respectable garb of firmness and honourableness, were dangerous foes.

About a year after he had gone to Denesbury, at a time when thoughts such as these were weighing particularly heavily on his mind, an unexpected meeting with an old acquaintance had resulted in his hearing a piece of news which, as he felt disinclined to speak of it to his mother, caused him to wrap himself up in the cloak of silence, that made her so anxious.

This was what had happened.

Hurrying one day down the steps of the main entrance to the Victoria Hall, with his head full of the arrangement of the programme for an organ-concert, he had come face to face with Captain Craufurd, who seemed destined to be the bearer of unpleasant tidings to both him and Blanche.

Herbert was promptly button-holed by the officer in question.

'Morning, Marley! Glad to see you. You're such a busy man and fashionable musician, now-a-days, old friends see nothing of you. Don't think we can have met since Wiesbaden. Nice place that; at least, wather nice. Pleasant people there too. Those friends of yours seemed so, I thought. Well, are you coming to the Assembly-Rooms' ball to-morrow?'

'No; I don't care about dancing.'

'Used to do so. Wemember seeing you enjoying a waltz immensely in the Wiesbaden *Kursaal* with that little German countess. Forget her name—Hergers—Herbers—something. Am told she is related to the Stapeletons. Nice girl

that Miss Stapeleton; wather stiff. Cold, I should say, decidedly cold; goes in for *nil admiwawi* style. Think I liked the young *gräfin* better. Great fun; fond of shocking people. Somewhat unorthodox; your line—eh, Marley?' Without waiting for an answer, this talkative man continued: 'By the way, saw Gifford yesterday; told me had been staying in the neighbourhood of the Croft; had heard Miss Stapeleton was going to be mawied. Thought you seemed wather smitten with her at one time. Wonder who the fellow is! Got money, no doubt, and position—yes, position. Am told that is what Colonel Stapeleton looks out for most. Queer fellow, isn't he? Never met anyone so pompous before. Such a bore, too; never knows when to hold his tongue;

always talk, talk, talk. Hate a man who's always talking.'

'So do I,' Herbert said to himself; and there came into his mind a certain old rhyme about kind Heaven giving us the gift to see ourselves as others see us. But knowing well what an ever ready tongue Captain Craufurd had, and by no means wishing to give him any food for gossip in this particular case, he collected himself, and said, with well-feigned indifference,—

'Engaged, you say—Miss Stapeleton?' I wonder to whom! What between my being so busy, and my mother being rather a bad correspondent, we hear next to nothing of old friends and neighbours.'

Captain Craufurd was satisfied, for though always on the look-out for sub-

jects to retail to every fresh person he met, he was not really gifted with much discernment. He had heard it rumoured that Herbert Marley had been on the point of marrying Miss Stapeleton himself; but he evidently did not care for her, or would have been at least *a little* startled at this sudden announcement.

As the captain's information went no further, the conversation came to an abrupt conclusion by Herbert's pleading press of business, and bidding farewell to his tormentor.

He could not make up his mind to mention, what he had heard to his mother; for though inwardly resenting it, he yet half believed in the possibility of Blanche's engagement to another being, if not an accomplished fact, at least one that would

happen sooner or later. She was free and therefore blameless in accepting some good man, whose views coincided with her own, if they loved each other; and her father would be only too glad to do all in his power to get his daughters suitably married.

At the same time, would she not have written at once to announce the fact to Mrs Marley, as being one of her oldest friends?

Putting off would do no good; for it would have to be told sooner or later, if really true, in spite of the painful recollections of what might have been, which it would awaken into fresh life.

Thus time went on, and Herbert, battling with conflicting feelings, maintained complete silence towards his mother,

and Blanche Stapeleton was not named between them.

If there had been any special reason to mention the family at the Croft to her son, Mrs Marley had hitherto done so, though avoiding speaking of them often. And once the before-mentioned silent fit had come over him, she had felt it doubly needful to steer clear of that or any other topic likely to prove unpleasant to him. This was how it had come to pass, that she made no mention of the announcement having reached her of the approaching marriage, not of Blanche and some fresh suitor, but of Mary and the curate, who had got a living, which had caused Colonel Stapeleton to consent to the wedding taking place.

It was the fact of a Miss Stapeleton

being about to be married, which had caused the report of which Captain Craufurd had spoken to Herbert. Sir Carew Gifford, his informant, hearing Colonel Stapeleton's second daughter was the one engaged to Mr Brotherton's *quondam* curate, and seeing the two sisters at a garden party, had asked the name of Blanche, who looked considerably younger than Mary, and whom he consequently took for the clergyman's betrothed. And thus, in all good faith, he had reported to Captain Craufurd the marriage of Blanche Stapeleton as about to come off.

After enduring much suspense, Herbert at length took heart of grace one morning, and asked his mother if she had received no news from the Croft. He

was told of Mary's wedding-day being fixed, and the ice being broken, owned to having heard of a rumoured match on the part of Blanche.

Mrs Marley laid her arm on his, and said,—

'No, my darling. Believe me, if I know Blanche as I think I do, she is not a woman who can love more than once.'

He had known it all along; yet this confirmation from his mother's lips fell like balm upon his heart, filling it with comfort such as had long been unknown to it. Seeing that women have so great a power for good or evil over their sons, all honour to them that they wield it, for the most part, on the side of good.

It is written of a king of old, that he

was tempted and fell. And 'his mother was his evil counsellor.' A brief record, yet how much it tells. But for one such woman, perverted in what should be her holiest feelings, her greatest strength, we have tens of thousands, some to be held up as examples as long as this world lasts; others living and dying in obscurity, of whom a nobler record, whether read of men or only of angels, does and shall exist. Whether naturally strong or weak, they have been wonderfully increased in strength through a sense of their responsibility when called upon to guide a wavering or reclaim an erring son, to minister to a dying one, or to give up a dear and only one at the call of his country and his God.

And amongst the glorious list of noble

mothers, Adelaide Marley's name may rightly be inscribed. We have already hinted as much. This woman, otherwise by no means faultless, indeed possessing failings which made it impossible for her to be a favourite with most people, was truly great, where her son was concerned. In small or important things she stood equally by him, ministering unto him according to her powers and his needs. No petty jealousy rose up in her, to place a barrier to her service. She loved him so deeply, that she was ready to be effaced for the sake of his greater happiness, and, never yielding to the temptation to have him all to herself, would only too gladly have been the means of re-uniting him to Blanche.

In this present case, too, her faithful

ness received its crown, for after the last reported conversation between them, Herbert went to his work with fresh energy; and the pleasant smile, which of late had so seldom lighted up his countenance, returned once more to fill their home with sunshine.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW FRIEND.

NOT long after the news of Mary's approaching wedding, another letter from the Croft reached Mrs Marley. It was from Mrs Stapeleton. Part of it ran as follows,—

'I hear that a very old friend of mine, Doctor Christopher Mackenzie, is going to settle at Denesbury, and take charge of the church of Saint Cross. Of course you know him by name, for as an author he has long been before the public;

and I hope you will soon have an opportunity of making his personal acquaintance. His wife is in very bad health, and owing to the strain on his system of a long period of overwork, he himself has been unable for some years to undertake any parochial work. If you and Herbert would call on them, it would give me great pleasure. And, if not too far out of your way, I would advise you to go and hear Doctor Mackenzie preach. It is many years since I have heard him myself; yet what he said always took such hold upon me, that the sentences now even come back to me word for word.'

'Well, mother,' Herbert said, when Mrs Marley had read him this passage

from their friend's letter, 'I suppose there is no getting out of it. We shall have to call on these people. I confess I think it rather a bore.'

'I don't think Mrs Stapeleton would have asked us to do it, unless she had felt very sure, it would prove a pleasure to both sides, Herbert. I will call on Mrs Mackenzie to-morrow. You will come, won't you?' was his mother's answer.

'Well, to-morrow afternoon happens to be free for me, so I cannot think of an excuse, mother, only you know I don't like paying visits.'

'Yes; all the same, it is good for you to do so sometimes. One becomes so unsociable by neglecting such little acts of courtesy.'

Of course it ended in Herbert yielding, and accompanying his mother on the morrow over the cobble-stones of Denesbury to an ugly brick house, bearing the number which had been given them as belonging to 'the new parson for Saint Cross.'

Doctor Mackenzie was out, but Mrs Marley and Herbert were ushered into a small drawing-room, where a pale, withered little woman lay on a sofa. She was so unaffectedly glad to see them, spoke so warmly of her husband's friendship for Mrs Stapeleton, whom she herself had not often had the opportunity of meeting, then passed on with such ease to really interesting, instead of merely conventional topics, that she quite won

their hearts. Herbert particularly, who, since he had started on a musical career, had suffered much from being both 'lionised' and patronised by people who did not really care a bit for music, was delighted by her sympathetic appreciation of his favourite composers, and the simple way in which she spoke, showing that her lips uttered of the fullness of her heart, and that she was not merely bent on drawing him out.

When they came away, his mother said,—

'Mrs Mackenzie is so charming, Herbert, that I hope you will be the more easily persuaded to make friends with her husband. Let us go to hear him preach on Sunday evening; that would

be the best time. I should not like to leave our own church in the morning.'

Herbert did not feel overjoyed at this proposition. Mrs Mackenzie's charms were no voucher to him for the good doctor's abilities as a preacher. However, he made no remonstrance, but was not sorry when the following Sunday proved so wet that walking into Denesbury was out of the question.

Of course, this only brought him a temporary respite; for when the first day of the week had again come round, bringing bright weather, his mother brought up the subject again, and induced him to start with her for the evening service at Saint Cross.

It was not a fashionable church, and

under its former clergyman had dull services and almost empty seats. Under Doctor Mackenzie, there already seemed a hope of more life coming into it.

There was not a rich person amongst the congregation, which was made up of small shopkeepers and persons whose days were spent in the warehouses and counting-houses, whence Denesbury derived its wealth.

Such material to work upon was not of the kind to rouse the sympathies of many clergy, who, whilst ready enough to feel for the misery of the very poor, or zealous in looking at the vices of the rich, considered this vast lower middle class as uninteresting as many people deem middle age to be, on account of

its lacking the sportive winningness of childhood and the venerableness of old age.

Yet this was a parish after the good doctor's own heart. It was an intense delight to him to think that he might be the means of bringing home brightness and ennobling thoughts to such persons; saving these lives, mostly occupied with grovelling drudgery, from the loss of all higher conceptions, and of the belief that even in their, seemingly, hopelessly dull and common-place sphere, there might be martyrs, witnessing spirits as heroic in their way as those engaged on the deadliest battlefield, or among the chief pioneers of science.

Is this an old truth; a truism? Ay, and

yet one of which one but too often loses sight.

Who was Christopher Mackenzie, you ask, the man come to bury himself, as many said, in Denesbury?

Friend, this is a needless question. You know him well as a man of brilliant parts; a scholar, whose erudition commands general respect; a preacher, whose eloquence has held an audience enchained, comprising the greatest thinkers of our universities; an author, whose works, both secular and religious, are described by the critics as containing rare gems of thought.

That is how *you* know, how the public knows him.

To his personal friends he is the most sympathetic, hospitable, kindly man of their

he is ready to undertake a parish of moderate size. He might have been a bishop long ago; but with his special gift for speaking to individual souls and showing them how nothing in itself need be common or unclean, he feels he can do better work elsewhere than on the episcopal bench, or in the organisation of a diocese. Surely, it is well in harmony with the fitness of things that this large-souled Scotchman should have been named Christopher. He, too, in his great strength is only willing to serve a Stronger—the Strongest; and like the giant saint of ancient legend, or Great Heart in our own English allegory, his special province had ever been to bear the burden of Christ, and the weak ones through

troubled waters, or to guide faint-hearted pilgrims through dangerous places and valleys of humiliation.

Such is the man who has come to Saint Cross.

Excepting that he is tall, muscular, with a well-developed chest, and shoulders well thrown back, Herbert can see him but indistinctly till he mounts the pulpit.

Hitherto his face has been in shadow, now the full light falls upon it, and reveals, though somewhat weather-beaten features, an almost perfect Grecian profile, a broad brow, at once peaceful and intellectual looking, and eyes which generally beam with the kindliest sympathy, but can flash forth the most withering scorn when their owner is holding forth against pharisaical-

ism, pedantry, social abuses, or anything else that is ignoble, though marked under whatever degree of outward pomp. The doctor's hair and beard once were tawny, now they are chiefly grizzly, though still showing something of that auburn colour peculiar to the dwellers across the border. There is both so much power and magnanimity in his appearance, that Herbert fully understands what an admirer meant, who described him as having the semblance of a noble lion; only the simile falls short, because the Christian preacher's glance is full of an overflowing charity, unknown, of course, in the king of beasts.

On the previous Sunday Doctor Mackenzie had read himself in; now he was beginning a course of sermons, and essayed

to present to his audience of obscure workers a picture of the holy manhood of Him Who, by His personal example, had given a special consecration to all humble toil and manual labour.

There was no display in the address, no straining after effect, no mere repetition of book learning; the speaker's utterance was simple, forcible, for the most part quiet and collected, but now and then a beautiful simile, a thought of rare large-heartedness, a burst of triumphant eloquence, revealed the genius of the man.

He hardly ever failed to carry the hearts of his hearers with him, because it was so clear to any earnest listener that he never treated them to second-hand remarks, but with a conscientiousness, refreshing as

it is rare, only imparted to them such thoughts as he had made so thoroughly his own, that they had, as it were, become part of himself, and such experiences as life had directly taught him.

On their homeward way, Herbert and his mother did not interchange a word as he gave her his arm to guide her over the irregular pavement; but, when Denesbury streets had been left behind, and they found themselves alone in the pleasant green lanes, which led to the Cottage, the young man said,—

'Mother, if there were many clergy who spoke like that, the churches would be fuller; and the women would not be so largely in the predominant.'

A pressure of the hand had told Mrs

Marley, as they left Saint Cross, that her son had cared for what he had heard, and she had felt pleased; but her joy increased tenfold as he went on to say,—

'What we have just heard reminded me of a statue we saw abroad; "Christ before the people"* it was called. Do you remember it, mother?'

'Indeed I do. I don't think any one once having seen, could forget it; such a wonderful piece of sculpture—and the marble was so exquisitely beautiful.'

'Yes, mother; and it was so different to all else we saw. Just a draped figure standing there with bound hands; no

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* The piece of sculpture referred to was exhibited in Paris in 1878, though, for the story's sake, the writer has ventured to speak of it as if of earlier date.

crown, no sceptre, no outward sign of kingship, yet such commanding dignity —an overflow of the inward majesty. When I looked at it, and often since, when calling it to mind, it has come home to me that it was before the mere nobility of such a presence, and not on account of any miracle, that Christ on leaving the synagogue passed unscathed through the angry crowd, and caused the multitude, "with swords and staves," to fall back in the Garden of Gethsemane. And that is how Doctor Mackenzie preaches Him, as *the* Man, the only real Man, so divinely human, because so divine. I know I don't put it well; but I think you see my meaning.'

'Yes, darling; I only wish you could

make it y[illegible]
explain it.'

'Dear [illegible]
worry to y[illegible]
come as yo[illegible]
say, since I [illegible]
"Almost pe[illegible]
are many p[illegible]

Even wh[illegible]
between thi[illegible]
plain-speaki[illegible]
him, who [illegible]
great effort[illegible]
knowledging[illegible]
but locked [illegible]
as mothers fr[illegible]
to do.

Ere long [illegible] had a ready admira- [illegible] he saw in people, [illegible] in owning to it. [illegible] gifts never touched [illegible] as unostenta- [illegible] work; and he did [illegible] a man's utterances [illegible] fruit in [illegible] concerts and musical [illegible] at the Victoria Hall, [illegible] became more and more [illegible] Mackenzie, too, was [illegible] making thorough ac- [illegible] need of his new [illegible] two men could not often [illegible] went on, a great [illegible] between them; and

make it your own as readily as you can explain it.'

'Dear mother, I know I am a sad worry to you; never mind. It may yet come as you wish. With Agrippa I could say, since I have heard Doctor Mackenzie, "Almost persuadest thou me;" only there are many perplexities yet in the way.'

Even where such sympathy reigned as between this mother and son, so much plain-speaking on a subject so near to him, who uttered it must have been a great effort; and Adelaide Marley, acknowledging this to herself, said no more, but locked up these words in her heart, as mothers from all time have been wont to do.

Ere long an opportunity offered for

Herbert to make Doctor Mackenzie's personal acquaintance, and they found much pleasure in each other's society.'

The doctor was a charming companion, owning the rarely combined gifts of being a good listener, with great conversational powers and much humour.

Mrs Stapeleton had written to him about Herbert, and the young man interested him, because he soon saw that, whilst his inclination was to be a thinker and dreamer, he was yet rousing himself to active work, because he saw it was right.

The clergyman of Saint Cross, though the last man in the world to prose about duty, and preferring, when out of the pulpit, to teach by example

rather than precept, had a ready admiration for any good which he saw in people, and a fearless frankness in owning to it. Indeed, mere brilliant gifts never touched his heart in the same way as unostentatious perseverance in work; and he did not care how sublime a man's utterances were, if he saw no corresponding fruit in his life.

As the number of concerts and musical festivals increased at the Victoria Hall, the organist's time became more and more filled up. Doctor Mackenzie, too, was much occupied with making thorough acquaintance with the need of his new parish, so that the two men could not often meet. Yet, as time went on, a great friendship sprang up between them; and

some good people were shocked, if they met the new clergyman of Saint Cross in intimate converse with the Victoria Hall organist, whose views, thanks to the lady who spoke so strongly about him to the dean, were more than suspected of being unorthodox.

Meanwhile, though faithful in his Sunday morning visits, as a duty, at the humdrum services of his parish church, of which some features have been described in a former chapter, the evenings saw Herbert regularly at Saint Cross, whether his mother went or not.

Not only was this new friend capable of giving him the exact help he needed, and had hitherto not come across; but the acquaintanceship had also been made when

he was prepared to receive assistance. Had it come to him, when he first went to Denesbury, it might have been useless. Then, his mind was still in a state of doubt, speculation, and confusion; but by the time Doctor Mackenzie arrived, the faithful doing of hard and not always congenial work, had produced a wholesome, sobering effect upon him, and prepared the way for the sowing of fresh seed.

CHAPTER V.

MAKING FURTHER ACQUAINTANCE.

A STORMY day, and a high wind, were refreshment to Doctor Mackenzie. Nothing seemed more restful to his hardworked brains than a battle with the elements in wild weather. With a shepherd's plaid wrapped round him, a glengarry or a clerical wide-awake on his head, and a knotted oak-stick in his hand, he had loved to wander for hours over moor and mountain in his Scotch home. In such moments, not in

his study, he had composed some of the grandest portions of his literary work; alone with nature, he felt best able to commune with its Author. The beauties of creation were as familiar friends to him; and his love and close observance of them, lent a charm and freshness to his written descriptions, which sometimes puzzled those who had heard of him only as the great preacher and student.

It was not, often, that he sought for a companion in his rambles. Sociable man as he was, he preferred mostly being alone then, for the reasons just given; but feeling the healthful influence of such exercise on himself, he would now and then ask people to go with him, whom he wished to help in any special way; and, after making ac-

quaintance with Herbert Marley, frequently invited the young man to join him. This, the busy organist was not often able to do; but every now and then (when feeling the pressure of overwork) he would saunter forth with Blunder on to Denesbury Heath, in hopes of meeting 'the big parson of Saint Cross,' as Christopher Mackenzie was familiarly called.

Blunder soon learned to know his master's friend, and Herbert was sure, if his faithful colley, having run off out of sight, came suddenly bounding back to him with many signs of delight, that ere long a tall figure wrapped in a plaid, swinging a stick, and striding along at a rapid pace, would be visible in the distance.

Then, in a few minutes, he would find

himself side by side with his friend, and plunging into an argument, on which each would valiantly do battle for his own views, or listening with deep interest to some idea, the doctor unfolded to him.

Though never shunning the acknowledgment of his own strong faith, Doctor Mackenzie did not try in any way, during the walks and talks they had together, to make Herbert speak on religious topics. He considered that arguments about them were seldom productive of good, rather, on the contrary, tending to strengthen each speaker in his own convictions; and he believed that no theological disquisition had the same persuasive force on a mind in doubt, as the witness to the power of Christianity shown in the strong manli-

ness, yet infinite sympathy and tenderness, which he held to be the special characteristics of a Christian man's life.

Thus two years passed in friendly intercourse between these men, without their once alluding directly to questions of faith in their converse, yet years in which they learnt to understand and feel at home with each other.

Doctor Mackenzie would not have possessed so much influence had he not been very patient; and, whilst he firmly hoped eventually to win back this young man, whose appreciation of all things beautiful and noble attracted him so much, his humble, reverent mind would have shrunk with horror from the idea of seeking to force circumstances instead

of biding the Lord of the Harvest's own time for reaping the fruits of his labours.

And thus it came about that Herbert made the first advance, and as they one day paced the heath together, said abruptly,—

'Doctor Mackenzie, you have taught me by your consistent conduct and manly teaching, that no theory or philosophy, however seemingly lofty, call it altruism, call it what you will, comes up to the Christian philosophy summed up in the two great commandments of the New Testament. And yet, in spite of this conviction of the beauty of its teachings, speculations and theorising have so bewildered me, that I do not like to call myself a Christian; for I don't

know whether I have any real faith in Christ.'

'What lead to your doubts in the first instance?' asked Christopher Mackenzie, looking on him as if indeed he loved him.

'Reading Schopenhauer's and other sceptical authors' works.'

'And had you no weapons wherewith to do battle for your faith?'

'I thought I knew something, even a good deal, of theology; however, when the temptation came, all became confusion in my mind, and I found my supposed beliefs had been mere idle theories.'

'Exactly. And that mere head knowledge did not help you a bit. No, nor did it ever prove safe armour for any

man against such foes, nor ever will. If your teaching had been of the simplest and smallest; and you had done many *deeds* for Christ, you would have been strong. Every such deed performed, every recollection of the help received from Him, would prove a weapon of defence against the assaults of rationalism far more powerful than the most skilled theological argument. Yes, heart-knowledge of the truth is the only safeguard against such attacks. And now, tell me, Marley, why, having begun to learn Christianity practically, you yet doubt whether you have any real faith in its Founder?'

'Because I question and question myself, and cannot make up my mind.'

'My son,' was the answer, 'that is the very reason you cannot satisfy yourself. Your continual questionings make it impossible for you to do so. Don't look; on the contrary, keep your eyes turned away from yourself. You give yourself no time for the evidences of faith to grow. If you would look for its fruits, you must wait patiently through a time of blossoming, gradual unfolding, and ripening; ay, and a between-season of cold, when the ground seems hopelessly hardened against yielding anything; and yet when the process is going on all the same. We must not be for ever rooting up our belief to look at it like children who have planted mustard and cress-seed in their gardens.'

'Then what am I to do, if I come to no conclusion?' asked Herbert, despairingly.

'Wait and tend the garden.'

'Tend it; how?'

'Just by trying to do as much of the Truth, that is, the Will of God, as conscience tells you is for you to do; and you will have time for nothing else.'

'That sounds plausible. Yet how am I to know what is the truth? People, since Pilate's time, have never ceased inquiring that, and get the most different answers. And seemingly good men would burn each other for heretics.'

'That is because they begin with an error, and think religion is like a mathematical proposition, to which there can

be but one answer, and all the time mistake their narrowness for zeal. We should rather believe truth to be many-sided like a crystal, though we short-sighted mortals for the most part can only see one side of it. And then, you may be sure, that trying to do the Divine Will, we shall know of the doctrine, that is not man's superstructure of dogmas, in harmony though they may be with the foundation, but God's teaching that He is light and love, and makes all things to minister to His one purpose, the perfection and gradual drawing out of human life into fuller possibilities and capabilities of service.'

'Then,' said Herbert, 'do you consider that belonging to a party in the church or

elsewhere is wrong? And that it does not matter very much what views one holds?'

'I will answer your last question first,' replied the doctor. 'That all mere partizanship is wrong, I think there is no doubt. On the other hand, much unnecessary bitterness among men might be avoided if they would bear in mind how few things are really fundamental principles, and how many may be safely held to be matters of opinion, on which it may be right for different people to think differently, if they would act according to their consciences.

'I myself look on all the antagonism of party feelings as stages to be passed through, alike by individuals and churches, not to be ungratefully reviled when left

behind, yet impossible to return to, once we have entered on the road to fuller knowledge and a larger-hearted charity.

'At the same time, it is well for those who, after much toil, have succeeded in "beating their music out," to bear in mind that others may have done the same, equally conscientiously, although with different results. Surely, it should not be hard to believe that there may be much truth, beauty, and harmony pervading the different systems, even as there is much in the musical compositions of many great masters, who differ strongly from each other.'

It was well for Herbert that he should have had the opportunity of learning from a man so wide in his sympathies. One of

the many with warm hearts but narrow creeds, would only have increased his bewilderment, or strengthened him in his unbelief; if, indeed, such a person had any effect on him at all.

The conversation given here was the forerunner of many others of a like nature, which aided in building Herbert gradually up in the faith. Of these, having given one specimen, I have no intention of writing a detailed account. It would weary the reader, and my object is only to indicate the means whereby a change took place in Herbert's mind, not to portray every step of the way.

Doctor Mackenzie's interest in his young friend increased more and more as the beauties and capabilities of his mind,

and the true reverence of his spirit, were gradually unfolded before him; and he felt very deeply, how great a gain one with the making of such a warrior, would be for the cause of truth. All seasons and weathers found him frequently turning his steps, at the hour when he took a constitutional, towards Denesbury heath, in the hopes of meeting and having a chat with Herbert.

The heath, though becoming additionally dear to him from such associations, had at first attracted him by being covered with gorse and heather, and studded with a goodly number of Scotch firs, all of which was pleasant to him, as bringing recollections of that northern county, for which the sight of many other

lands had not been able to lessen his love.

Brave, loyal heart; his attachment once given to things inanimate even, might be reckoned on, as sure to endure as long as he drew breath. And this same devotion had caused him many a heartache. Sorrows he had known, deep and many. Need it be said that he had done so? Surely, without those 'cleansing fires,' that purifying discipline, he never could have been the consoler, the raiser-up of many. Out of each trial he had come forth stronger to bear, more able to sympathise, increased in knowledge how to meet and heal the wearing griefs of his brethren.

None knew this better, than she who

had been the partner of his life, the sharer in his cares.

In early days, one very heavy blow had fallen upon them. A yacht, bringing their little ones to join them on an island off the coast of Scotland, where they wished to spend a well-earned holiday, was wrecked; and the sea only gave them back their dead.

A daughter had been born to them after that, and died when she reached her eighteenth year.

From that time, their hearth was childless.

But Doctor Mackenzie ever felt specially drawn towards the young; and so, as Herbert Marley grew better known to him, and came to be taught of his experi-

ence, he felt, indeed, as if a son had once more been given him; and with the gift, he felt the responsibility it brought.

Without doubt, this was an essentially noble work he was undertaking; and yet, like many of the noblest, it caused him to be misjudged.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE ABOUT DENESBURY.

AFTER several years of faithful service on his part, Denesbury had begun to understand the clergyman of Saint Cross. At first it had been puzzled by him. The reason was that it could not label him, which was a new experience for a town, where the evangelicalism of the dean, the ritualism of the incumbent of Saint Michael and All Angels, and the broad church views

of the vicar of Saint Peter's were well known, much commented on, and greatly praised or censured, according to the bias of the person who spoke.

Now, Doctor Mackenzie was different to all the above-mentioned gentlemen. His services were hearty, frequent, and reverent; he invited special preachers for Lent, and duly observed the great days of the Church. Yet he puzzled Denesbury.

Those he asked to preach belonged to different schools of thought; and, where practical work for the good of the place was concerned, he was ready to join equally heartily with the clergy of Saint Michael's or Saint Peter's, and seemed on excellent terms with the dean.

In short, he identified himself with no party.

One day, when accosted by an inquisitive spinster, and asked point blank if he were a broad churchman, he gave the humorous smile which was peculiar to him, and replied that he tried to be broad in his sympathies, but cared for no party name; for his experience had been, that so-called broad church people could be as narrow and hasty in their judgments as any others.

The majority had come to think well of him; and, as I have said, Denesbury in general had begun to understand him. But there were exceptions in both cases.

Such an exception was the lady who, on the occasion of the candidates for the

post of organist at the Victoria Hall being put on their trial, had reported to the dean what she had heard about Mr Marley's religious opinions.

Her husband had retired from the army, and they had settled at Denesbury, where, being the daughter of a former bishop, she thought herself of some importance. And in a certain sense she was right. Though it may be hard to decide whether it was on account of her near relationship to the defunct prelate, or because of the extreme activity of her tongue, which made her a person to be feared, it is yet true that she generally found plenty of people to listen to and make a fuss with her.

For some unknown reason, unless it may have been because he did not seem

in the least afraid of her, she had taken a dislike from the first to Doctor Mackenzie, which feeling grew and strengthened when she found that he made friends with Mr Marley. Consequently she took upon herself to abuse them both on every possible occasion.

At first no one heeded her, because both men proved popular; but when, after a while, a circumstance arose which seemed likely to lessen the favour with which Doctor Mackenzie was regarded, and to raise up enemies for the Victoria Hall organist, she felt the time for airing her spite had indeed come, and girded up herself for further action.

The crisis she had longed for was brought about by an act on the part of

Doctor Mackenzie, concerning which people held different views, but which, excepting for her fanning the flame of discontent, would not have met with the fierce opposition it eventually called forth.

It was as follows :—

The doctor, who was a man of means, and loved music, which he looked upon as a great aid in lifting up the hearts of those engaged in worship, purchased, at his own expense, a fine organ for Saint Cross.

When he had come to the parish he had found that the music was very bad, and the old organ still worse ; so that he had decided in his mind to make a change as soon as possible. He had felt that the first step must be to procure a new instrument for accompanying the singing ; but it was

an outlay which he was not able at once to meet, and his parishioners were too poor to do so themselves. Once, however, the purchase of an organ was achieved, the difficulty of forming a choir did not appear great, as his congregation was largely composed of young men, many of whom were ready to offer their services; only, of course, some one must be found to train them.

For this purpose, Doctor Mackenzie had set his affections on having no other than Herbert Marley.

Busy as the Victoria Hall organist was, he yet would be able to spare an evening hour twice in the week; and it was certain that the choir would make rapid progress under his tuition.

But it was above all on the young man's

own account, that his friend desired to secure his services for Saint Cross. The wise doctor felt that such a request would be a great encouragement to one of Herbert's diffident and sensitive disposition, and give him especial opportunities for testing what progress he had made in re-establishing his religious convictions.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Doctor Mackenzie called at the Cottage to put the question.

He found Herbert; who was evidently pleased, yet startled, at the proposal.

'Have me for your organist, Doctor Mackenzie!' he exclaimed. 'If you will forgive me for saying so, you are a bold man to think of such a thing. You would have all the orthodoxy of Denesbury down

upon you, if you attempted it. The ritual disturbances would be nothing, to the storms that would break loose in consequence of such an act.'

'My dear fellow,' answered the doctor, in his grand Scotch accent, which somehow always brought to Herbert's mind memories of the wild, rocky, wave-lashed coast of North Britain, 'what, after all, do you mean by orthodoxy? For myself, I know no other test than that of Saint John, who tells us we know, *we are of the truth*, when we love "not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Now that man knew — nobody better—of what he was speaking. Had he not seen it acted out before him, for three whole years, by the Truth Himself?'

'Yes; but now-a-days, each holds his particular way of thinking to be right. You know the witty Warburton's saying about orthodoxy being one's own 'doxy, and heterodoxy everybody else's.'

'Ah, yes! A wise remark. But, lad, these people must learn better. They will have to do so, some day. And now, as I on my part, fully, feel that I am acting for the best in asking you to undertake this office, it only remains for you to say whether you will or not.'

'As to me,' was Herbert's rejoinder, 'I am ready, though feeling very unworthy; and so, if you really wish it, will say yes. The only other drawback of which I could think, is one that will now be removed. My increased means have enabled me to buy a

pony carriage for my mother, otherwise I could not have engaged to be present at all your Sunday services, on her account; for she would have been left to go to church alone. But as it is, she can accompany me, whenever she likes. Besides, we have decided to leave the dear old Cottage in a year's time. It is very damp in winter, so, though rather against our wills, we thought of taking a house in Denesbury. Fortunately, I can now afford a very much more comfortable and better situated one than when first we came here. Also, being near you and Saint Cross will make up for much that we shall regret here.'

'Very well. Then you will be my organist.'

Thus easily had the affair been settled between Herbert and Doctor Mackenzie; but not so easily nor so peaceably had Denesbury, egged on by the busy-tongued daughter of the late bishop, accepted the matter. It was preposterous, it was scandalous, it was quite unheard of. Doctor Mackenzie fancied he could allow himself a good deal; but he would find his mistake. The line must be drawn somewhere, so indignant Denesbury decreed; and that somewhere, must be making the unorthodox organist of the Victoria Hall fill a like post at the church of Saint Cross.

Just then there was a dearth of subjects to gossip about, and this fresh scandal was a great boon.

If Herbert had been invited to preach

instead of to play at Saint Cross, more could not have been said about it. An indignation meeting was got up by some specially zealous persons. It was said the bishop must be appealed to, and a discussion arose as to whether it was not a case to come under the Public Worship Regulation Act. Whether or no, there was a hitch, because no 'aggrieved parishioners' were forthcoming. The excitement only prevailed amongst casual visitors to Saint Cross, and other outsiders. Doctor Mackenzie carried his parishioners along with him. At first he had taken no notice of the gossip concerning his conduct; but after the local papers had taken it up as a 'burning question,' and the indignation meeting had been held, he felt further silence on

his part might be open to misconstruction, and therefore called a meeting of his parishioners in the large schoolroom. Having briefly explained his views on the subject in hand, and expressed his belief that Mr Marley would do his utmost to further the reverent and hearty performance of their common acts of worship at the church, where he had been so constant an attendant for some years, Doctor Mackenzie said he and his friend both wished, after the strong expression people had given to their opinions, that no violence should be done to the feelings of those really belonging to the parish, he therefore put it to the vote, whether Mr Marley should become their organist or not.

It was unanimously carried in Herbert's

favour, and the people's churchwarden rose to express, in their name, full confidence in the vicar's choice.

So the indignation meeting ended in smoke, and the appeal to the bishop was not made.

As to Herbert, he felt overjoyed at the result; one reason being that he knew how glad Blanche would be, if an account of the whole affair reached her ears. For, even if she no longer felt the same towards him, she would yet be glad, that he should once more feel able to take an active part in the services of the church. As to himself, training the choir interested, and playing the voluntaries and accompaniments was as great a help to him, as his friend had felt it would be.

Weather-cock-like, public opinion veered round, when it became evident that Saint Cross had the best choir, with the exception of the cathedral, and the best played organ, with no exception, in the place. People began to think the late bishop's daughter had spoken foolishly, and that though there certainly had been rumours about the unorthodoxy of Mr Marley's religious opinions when he had first come to Denesbury, yet no one knew whence these reports had emanated, and certainly since he had sojourned in the town, nothing in his conduct could be construed into a confirmation of them. He was a great friend of Doctor Mackenzie's, a frequent attendant at public worship, and if he had any enemies in other quarters, it was only

because he filled his post so conscientiously; and displayed such unrivalled talent. His compositions had been produced in London and other great musical centres with much success; therefore, why should not Denesbury be thankful for possessing a treasure for which many envied it?

In short, everybody seemed settling down into contentment. But there was one exception. It seems needless to say, this was the lady, who had caused the disturbance. She could not brook being thwarted. If Doctor Mackenzie had done her some personal injury, her dislike to him could not have been greater, than disappointment now rendered it. She felt determined to be even with him. If anyone had told her she was spiteful, she

would have been greatly surprised. She looked on herself as the champion of orthodoxy in a dangerous age, and as such, considered she was waging a righteous war. Such was her self-deception. Her mode of action was as follows :—

With the exception of taking up her residence in the parish, she imitated the conduct of others whose ambition it has been to represent 'aggrieved parishioners;' *i.e.*, she went to Saint Cross for the purpose of spying out the land, and as there were no extravagances or slovenlinesses in the service on which she could fasten her spite, she set to work to dissect the sermons. Of these, she reported at a convenient season as follows to the dean.

Doctor Mackenzie was promulgating dangerous and heretical doctrines; he had emphatically declared that there was no punishment in store for the wicked; he had ventured to maintain that romping with children or any other equally trivial occupation was as good as going to church; he had preached the heresy, that as long as people lived well, their faith mattered little.

These things were utterly shocking; but what else could be expected of a man who had acted about his organist as the doctor had?

Ere speaking of the amount of effect produced on the dean, I will, for the sake of those who may have learnt to love and reverence the clergyman of Saint Cross as

he deserved, give quotations from the three sermons which had been thus misconstrued, and cite the passages *verbatim*, to which exception had been taken.

The first ran as follows :—

'Looking round on all the whirl and turmoil, the crime and sorrow, abounding in the life of a great city like this, I should feel overwhelmed with misery, but for believing, I may in all humility hope for a restitution of all things in the ages to come. I mean, a time when evil shall be nowhere, and Good everywhere ; because, by no figure of speech, no straining of metaphor, but in very truth, God shall be all in all.'

The second was thus :—

'Brethren, remember all service is wor-

ship; therefore all life should be, in grave things and in gay, one great act of worship, in which our prayers and gatherings at church are but an infinitesimally small portion.

'Therefore I feel justified in saying that any one of you, even by bringing a smile to the lips of a little child, and thus making a fresh fountain of joy (which is one of the most divine of the divine gifts) spring up in its young heart; that you may, I say, thereby be as truly doing God's work as in taking your places in these pews, and assisting at the acts of prayer and praise of this place. People talk of such meetings as being for *divine service*, which is often a convenient phrase; and, as far as it goes, a true one. Yet,

let us rather not use it, than allow it to become an *exclusive* expression to us, raising up a division between these direct acts of communion with God and other portions of our daily life. For, surely, if *that* be worth anything at all, it must be likewise "divine service."'

And the last straw for the garrulous lady lay in this:—

'Believe me, nothing is more likely to lead to agnosticism or atheism than much theorising, with little corresponding outcome, in the life of a man. On the other hand, nothing is so likely to make a man of God than the earnest striving, amidst many misgivings and doubts, to live up to the often dim and uncertain light one possesses.'

This last was much the same in substance as what Doctor Mackenzie had said to Herbert, when the latter had opened his heart to him. Then, it had been a comfort to him who listened; but it only called forth the wrath of the lady, who came to hear the good doctor with the same intention, not to quote a higher illustration, with which the Athenians of old flocked to hear Socrates.

And how did the dean receive the worthy woman's communications?

Quietly, and with few words, as befitted his dignity; yet, being a narrow-minded and not very clever man, he felt alarmed. He told his informant he really did not see his way to taking any steps in the matter, and must weigh the different

charges in his mind, before he could even pronounce on them. However, to be on the safe side, he preached a forcible sermon the following Sunday, on the certainty of eternal punishment, which, as he was very tender-hearted, must have cost him a good deal. This he followed up, by two other discourses, wherein it seemed to him that he had triumphantly refuted any dangerous sentiments, uttered by his brother of Saint Cross. Then he thought he had done his duty.

We see the late prelate's daughter did not meet, so far, with any brilliant success; and, having failed with the dean, she vowed inwardly that the bishop should prove more energetic; only she felt that an appeal to the latter would not carry

weight, unless made in a more formal manner. To effect this, she began by going with her suspicions to a certain Admiral Hartletop, a man of whom we have often seen the counterpart,—a retired naval officer, who felt it his mission to act as what some of our Transatlantic cousins would irreverently designate 'sky-pilot' to his brethren.

Like many worthy persons of a similar turn of mind, he combined a very small portion of tact with a large amount of zeal,—the result being that most people voted him a bore, whilst few gave him credit for the extreme conscientiousness which he indeed possessed.

In all matters, connected with the element, with which his profession is speci-

ally concerned, his experience and cleverness were beyond doubt; and that made it all the more unfortunate, that instead of sticking to the salt water, he should have so greatly preferred fanning the fire of theological controversy. Yet, how many do not equally perversely pride themselves on possessing capabilities, with which, if at all, they are really only endowed in a very slight degree, whilst they think little of talents, which have indeed been vouchsafed to them?

We all know the man, who writes a good critical essay, but will believe himself a born poet; whereas his verses are execrable, and only praised in third-rate country newspapers.

One is equally familiar with the lady

who plays beautifully, yet can only be prevailed upon to sing; though neither her voice nor method in any way come up to the ideas she entertains of them.

Let us, however, not multiply examples, but return to Admiral Hartletop. He fell easily into the trap set for him, and looked on it as a 'special mission' to warn unwary brethren against being led away by the insidious teaching of a crafty Scotchman. To commence operations, he wrote a pamphlet about not believing those who 'preached another gospel.' Men of his stamp, love to see themselves in print.

Finally, after having done all he could by speaking to individuals on the subject, he called a private meeting of friends at

his house, and it was then and there agreed to memorialise the bishop. Fortunately, he who ruled over Denesbury diocese, was a peace-loving and wise man.

A considerable time elapsed ere he gave an answer to Admiral Hartletop and Co. When the reply came, in the form of a brief note from his secretary, the memorialisers began to feel indeed as if the world had grown very evil, since even prelates had become lukewarm in their defence of the faith.

The bishop's answer was to the following effect:—

His lordship regretted that stress of business had rendered him unable to notice the memorial sooner; at the same

time, the delay had given him opportunites for further convincing himself of the fact, that Doctor Mackenzie was doing a noble work amongst his parishioners, who placed the utmost confidence in their incumbent. The more, such men took Orders, the better it would be for the Church. His lordship felt satisfied the memorialisers would be glad that their fears had been proved to possess so little foundation.'

After that, Admiral Hartletop, those who thought with him, and even the lady who had been the cause of all the uproar, could but feel that the wisest course lay in leaving Doctor Mackenzie alone.

He, good man, was much too busy to

trouble himself about their opinion of him; and the parish of Saint Cross throve in a way it had never done under any other incumbent.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNFORTUNATE POET.

IT now behoves me, to introduce a new character to those who peruse these pages, one who, though seemingly of little importance, exercised considerable influence, both directly and indirectly, over the outer and inner circumstances of Herbert Marley's life. This man bore the name of Josiah Atkinson.

We may put the question, 'What is

He came of a well-to-do race of northern farmers. Fourteen generations had undoubtedly—tradition said yet many more—lived on the same piece of land, and filled their purses by pig-breeding. They were long-headed, thrifty, and surly, slow to forgive, and slow to make friends; good haters and staunch allies; afraid, above all, of being found to possess 'feelings,' yet with hearts capable of deep attachment, beating under the roughest exteriors.

Of this unlikely stock, had sprung a poet — this was Josiah. If astrology deserves any credit, the aspect of the planets at the hour of his birth must have been foreboding of much ill. Instead of a fairy godmother presiding at

his cradle, ill-fortune dogged his steps from infancy.

His father hated the sight of him, because his coming into the world had cost his mother her life; and because as a child he was weak and sickly, as a youth dreamy and studious, instead of being of the practical stuff needful to the making of a good farmer; in short, not of a nature akin to that of his eight brothers, all of whom were capable of earning their bread in the line followed by their forebears. As there were enough of them, and of the right sort, their father did not see what Josiah had 'come bothering' for, being of no good to anybody, inferior, indeed, even to the prodigal son in his capacities for pig-keeping, and spending

the money brought in by the swine, on profitless husks.

This, expressed in broad Yorkshire dialect, was the sum of old George Atkinson's frequent grumblings to his cousin and housekeeper, Sarah Dale. What he designated as 'husks' were the books and papers, on which his son spent every farthing on which he could lay his hands; for it was not till want of success and banishment from his father's house had well-nigh driven him to despair, that Josiah took to spending his money in riotous living.

With great educational advantages, and disciplined by systematic teaching, above all with home sympathy to encourage him, he might have gained high honours

amongst our national poets; but no strong, yet gentle hand was held out to him at the outset of his career. A rough grasp on his collar, a cudgel laid by no means lightly across his shoulders, a volley of oaths poured into his ears, such was the treatment in plenty meted out to him for being 'a lazy, forgetful hound,' when given work to do as a boy.

For eighteen years of his life he endured misunderstandings, rough usage, and his father's contempt of him, which could not have been greater had love of vice and not of learning been his chief characteristic; then one day, weary of working on the sly in his garret room, weary of the daily contact with spirits which were in nowise akin to his own,

he made his bundle and fled, like Dick Whittington, from what was not a home to him, but a house of bondage.

He managed to make his way to Aberdeen, having heard that education in Scotland was both cheap and good; and once there, tried to put himself into communication with Edinburgh publishers, and meant, when his funds would allow of it, to seek admittance to the University.

But his was not to be the success-crowned genius, which wakes up some morning to find itself famous; no, the more common lot of minds in advance of their age or circumstances, awaited him. Disappointment, refusal of his writings on account of the pecuniary risk attending the publication of anything

strikingly original and provocative, by an unknown author; hope deferred, despair, threatening starvation,—these were his portion.

When his cup of bitterness seemed well nigh full to overflowing, he took heart of grace and wrote to his father, confessing his wrong-doing in running away from home, and asking leave to return.

The answer came only too soon, in a stiff, cramped hand, the writing of which had evidently been a great undertaking for the farmer's unaccustomed fingers; however, if the penmanship and spelling were faulty, the meaning of the letter left nothing to be desired in the way of plainness. It stated, that if Josiah ventured to show himself within the gates

of the farm, the dogs should be let loose upon him.

It was after the reception of this communication, which cut off all ground for hope from beneath his feet, that the unhappy youth began indeed to lead a prodigal's life; because, when the brandy coursed like fire through his veins, he could for a while forget his hunger and gnawing cares, and flashes of inspiration would come to him, and hope reigned supreme in his bosom. Such brief periods of illumination, seemed almost worth the cost of the dark hours of despair, which inevitably followed them.

His fame was not likely to spread, for his compositions only found acceptance with editors of unimportant coun-

try newspapers; and, who looks for genius in the versemakers' corner of a local journal?

Like many another of his kind, he might have died of want, unknown and alone; but greater length of days was in store for him.

One bitter winter's night, the wife of an Aberdeen man of business, about to enter her house, as she returned from a bright social gathering, noticed a human form lying motionless near her doorstep.

'Only a drunken man, ma'am; the police will find him,' so the servant said.

But the woman's heart of the mistress prompted her to reply,—

'Drunken or not, this is no fit night for any creature to be out in the street.'

Much to their disgust, two self-righteous, brethren-despising retainers were ordered to bring the poor outcast into the hall; and there, looking on the worn face, so plaintive in its youthfulness, so stamped with suffering, though it might likewise be with sin, there came home to her who thus gazed, the tender compassion, of One Perfect in Holiness, whether in dealing with a faithless disciple and a sinful woman, and she said,—

'He looks very ill, poor lad. We must keep him here for to-night.'

Without in any way trespassing, on the ecclesiastical aspect of the question of the power of the keys, let us rejoice that in this simple, yet most real sense, binding and loosing our fellow-men is

within reach of us all. Had Josiah been handed over to the authorities that night, to be confined in a police cell, and brought before a magistrate, the world, if it gave the matter even a moment's thought, would have said, it was perfectly right; the law must have its course; public order must be maintained. A matter difficult, certainly not wholly advisable, to refute. Yet, by the ruling of the higher law of love, a young life received the first redeeming touch, and noble powers were loosed from the thraldom of vice and given a fresh opportunity of being reconsecrated to their original purpose.

'It is all very well your indulging in a little philanthropy, Sarah,' was the

remark addressed one morning at breakfast by her husband to the lady who had found Josiah on her doorstep; 'but, there is a reasonable limit to all things, my dear, or ought to be, and it seems to me, you are riding this particular hobby a little too far. This last *protégé* of yours has been ten days in the house, and what are we to do with him? That is what I should like to know.'

Most other husbands would have agreed with Angus Graeme; many would not have shown so much patience as he had done in this instance. But, then, he was very proud and fond of his wife, and, as a rule, believed firmly in the wisdom with which she carried out her charitable designs.

Mrs Graeme felt, her Angus was right; yet how to reply to him, and what to do with Josiah she did not know. The young man had been proved to be suffering from more than the effects of too great an amount of alcoholic liquor; indeed, cold, want, and exposure had done their disastrous work so effectually, that he had been too feeble to answer any questions about himself till after a week's nursing.

The first needful step was to find out, if his own account of himself tallied with information, gathered from others, and the next, to see how he could be secured from want, by being provided with suitable occupation.

Altogether, Mrs Graeme considered it

most diplomatic to try and gain time, and put off her husband with—

'We must wait a little longer, Angus, before we come to any decision.'

At this reply, a merry smile lighted up Mr Graeme's good-humoured face, then he tried hard to look much dismayed, as he lifted up his hands in comic resignation, and answered,—

'I suppose we must.'

That same day, Mrs Graeme set about making inquiries concerning the youth who was on her hands, and began by calling at the address he gave as that of the place, where he had lodged.

The footman, she sent before to ask the way, thought his mistress must be quite 'beside herself' to put foot in such

a shabby street, and unburthened his mind to that effect to the coachman, when sent back to the carriage by Mrs Graeme, who preferred making further inquiries alone.

Little information, concerning Josiah could the landlady of the miserable lodgings give. She owned to his having paid her, absurdly high, charge regularly, though seeming often to have nothing left wherewith to buy a meal. When he had first come to her, he had been sober and quiet enough, always writing or poring over worn, old books. Later, however, he had taken to coming home in the small hours of the night, sometimes reeling, and his room reeked with brandy. Mrs M'Queen intimated she

thought things began to look bad, when he was no longer contented with a 'gude glass o' whusky,' such as the minister, honest man, had always been contented with when he came to her house. For she had seen better days, and knew what good company was. Well, she could tell the lady, that many another woman would have turned the lad out long before, but she looked upon him as a 'mitherless bairn,' so had put up with him, which meant, she knew it was possible to have to wait a long time for another tenant, and that it was not always her lot to have one, who paid his rent punctually.

How Josiah had managed to pay his way at all, even by the pittance received

from editors of newspapers and selling his own stock of books one by one to second-hand dealers, was a mystery to Mrs Graeme. It said a good deal for his carefulness and honesty, and these were qualities to be taken into consideration in arranging for his future. Of course, he had no claims on his benefactress, yet she felt it incumbent upon her to do her best to insure his not being thrown so completely friendless on the world again, and to help him to start afresh.

Through a Yorkshire clerical friend, inquiries were set on foot, resulting in an answer being returned to the effect that George Atkinson, a hard man, and his youngest son, had undoubtedly incompatible temperaments, without its seeming

exactly easy to prove on which side the fault chiefly lay. In short, it appeared that Josiah had told no falsehood about himself and his antecedents: and Mrs Graeme's interest increased proportionately in the large-eyed, worn-looking youth, whose small, frail figure made him little fit to battle with the world.

Gradually, too, her husband came to share her opinions, in a modified degree. Though, himself, a thoroughly practical, not intellectual, man, he could appreciate culture in others; and in the few conversations they had together, was surprised at the well-chosen language in which the lad, whom his wife had brought home to nurse, expressed his opinions, as well as at his quaint way of looking at things. In

fact, little pressure would have been required to make Mr Graeme take Josiah into his own house of business, which was as strong a proof of his appreciation of the latter's capacities, as it was possible for him to give; though the recipient might not have looked on such an offer as an honour to be coveted.

As it happened, he did not keep Josiah, because the young man's chest was weakened by the cold and exposure of the night on which Mrs Graeme had found him; and a warmer place than Aberdeen was declared to be necessary for his restoration to health.

'I think Denesbury might do,' said Mr Graeme, when the subject was next mooted. This conclusion he had arrived at after being wrapped for at least half-an-hour in

silent thought, a very unusual circumstance on the rare occasions when he could spend a quiet evening with his wife; for he loved talking to her.

'Denesbury, Angus, for my poet? How is he to earn his bread there?'

'At Westcotts'.'

This was a large firm of brewers, in which Mr Graeme's brother-in-law was senior partner.

'At Westcotts'?' inquired Mrs Græme, incredulously. 'Why, they wouldn't have him there. A young man with no certificates, and not particularly recommendable antecedents. You know it is considered an excellent, and by no means easily procurable, berth for very steady, practical youths to get a clerkship at Westcotts'.

Besides, I doubt, my *protégé's* doing for that sort of thing, at all. Imagine anyone with his genius being tied to a counting-house desk; particularly, that he, whose thoughts must run on the nectar of Olympus, should be doomed to enter barrels of beer in a brewer's ledger. The idea is too ludicrous, Angus.'

'Come, Sarah, *facilis decensus Averni;* you see I haven't quite forgotten my classics, and so, perhaps, it may be the same with Olympus! At anyrate, if your "mute, inglorious Milton;" for, so I think we may at present consider him, can be put in the way of earning his daily bread decently, he may be thankful, and has no call to be particular about the butter, let alone nectar and ambrosia. In other

words, he must not expect to be supplied with scope for his poetical fancies. Genius, without means or interest with some literary swells to back it, is by no means a paying concern, in fact, often a very fatal possession—a sort of white elephant, I consider. Had it not been for what you look on as your *protégé's* brilliant gifts, he might never have been on our hands, but be turning an honest penny by pig-keeping, like the rest of his brethren.'

'Oh, you prosaic, matter-of-fact, old darling! what do you think the world would come to if there were none but eminently practical people like yourself in it?'

'I cannot say; but I don't believe it would be turned half so topsy-turvy, as if

it only contained "feckless," erratic personages like the highly-endowed Mr Josiah Atkinson.'

'Perhaps not,' and Mrs Graeme heaved a somewhat comical sigh; experience had reduced the chaos of her enthusiasms to order by successive touches of its illusion-dispelling wand; still she had had her share of fanciful day-dreams, when this work-a-day world, with its ups and downs, was to have been changed into a Utopian kingdom, partly due to herself. And, after all, it had ended in her marrying Angus Graeme, the wealthy, keen-sighted man of business, and settling down into a kindly, charitably-disposed matron, who was only on rare occasions guilty of little sentimentalities.

'Well, Angus,' she added, after a pause, 'supposing Josiah should look on the proposal of becoming an office drudge, with the humble, eager thankfulness which you consider to be the proper frame of mind for him, I still fail to see how your saying he is to go to Westcotts' will get him taken in there.'

'Of course I cannot be certain, dear, till I hear from Tom; only I mean to say a good word for him, and to put it in the light of a personal favour to myself, that he should be taken on trial. If Tom has a soft corner in his heart, it is for people with weak chests, because of having lost Annie, of consumption, when they lived in that cold, damp place up in the north. Poor fellow, I don't think he will ever

get over that child's death. Another reason, why your poetical friend stands a fair chance of being accepted, is that there is a stress of work just at present at Westcotts, and they are short of hands. Owing to that ruffian Dixon's absconding, there has been a change among the clerks, as several, on whom suspicion of dishonest dealing fell, have been dismissed. And the strikes and general discontent make it less easy than usual to fill up the vacancies with Denesbury people.'

Angus Graeme proved right.

Mr Westcott replied that, though it was contrary to his usual habits to take any young man into his office who was not furnished with the highest recommendations; yet on his brother-in-law's putting

it in the light of a personal obligation, Atkinson should be received into the counting-house for a while, his own conduct deciding whether permanent employment should be given him or not.

Farewell, therefore, to Josiah's vague hopes of future glory and celebrity. The bundle of manuscripts was to be exchanged for the account-book, the scanning of diverse metres for the mastering of double entry.

He was given some clothes, a small sum of money, and a ticket to Denesbury, and once there entered on his new duties without delay.

At first he settled down full of good resolutions, and buoyed up by the hope, that patient endurance for a while in the

fulfilment of uncongenial work might pave the way to future opportunities for gaining knowledge and finding scope for his powers. For a time he rested content with his lot, and behaved altogether in a way which his benefactors could only applaud.

It was not for long.

To soon, he began to feel cramped, fettered, and eager to throw off the restraint of his office life. Then, once more the old temptation to drown his sorrows in drink returned to him with power, and he yielded and fell.

That he should pay for his weakness, first by an aching head, and then by a besotted brain, was only natural. Day after day, as he dragged his unwilling steps to the counting-house, his face grew

more haggard, his looks more dissipated, till, to shield himself from the senior partner's all-discerning eyes became no longer possible, and a sadly blundered page of entries cost him his place.

What was he to do? To appeal to his kind friends at Aberdeen he felt ashamed, to throw himself on his father's mercy was impossible.

It was winter again, and, but for a happy circumstance, he might once more have been found insensible on a doorstep, perhaps picked up on this fresh occasion, by less merciful hands, or left unnoticed too long to be within reach of any human tenderness.

After being dismissed from Westcotts', he lingered on in Denesbury from sheer

purposelessness, and inability to come to any conclusion as to what further steps were feasible, attracted also, it is possible, by the manifold book-stalls in which the old town abounded.

One bitter Sunday evening, destitute alike of food, drink, and fuel, his small stock of earnings being well nigh at an end, he had sauntered out into the streets, just because he had felt unutterably miserable.

After wandering round aimlessly for a while, he found himself by the porch of the church of Saint Cross. It looked light and warm, so he entered, though avoiding churches as a rule, looking on them like so many of life's wanderers, as meant for the well-to-do, not for such as himself.

There was a vacant seat near the door, and he dropped into it, and for a few minutes gave himself up to the pleasant influence of the heat and light. The unaccustomed surroundings somewhat confused him, and as he sat there chafing his blue fingers, it was only with a strong effort that he could bring himself to take in what was going on.

The sound of words spoken in rich, musical utterance reached his ears; and this was what he heard:—

'You need not remind me, brethren, of the sorrows, misunderstandings, forlornness and misery, which abound in the world. Verily, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth. Few, believe me, can know it better than myself, whose lot as

a clergyman has been cast in a great commercial city like this. Undoubtedly, a keen wail of pain mixes with the divine harmony of creation. Yet, be sure that the purpose of the universe *is* harmony; and that each, even to the least esteemed or understood among us, may figure as a note or chord in this symphony of God's.

'And in what does this divine harmony consist? It is a service of praise. The very keynote is praise and self-surrender. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Remember that, all of you, who wish to bear a part in this heavenly music. No flights of genius, however lofty, no eloquence, however sublime, can make up for the neglect of the duty, that

lies nearest, of the waiting on the Master in our brethren.'

Prayers, and a blessing followed, and all the while Josiah's eyes remained riveted on the man, who had thus addressed the people; and to the lad, well versed in classic lore, it seemed as if one of the heroes of ancient mythology had spoken; so powerful were both face and figure of the speaker. It might have been Hercules grown old in the performance of mighty tasks, or Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders; for, good men and true, the young poet looked upon as not belonging exclusively to any race or time, but rather as being earnests of the perfection to which humanity is capable of attaining.

The last Amen died away, and then the sound of music, at once majestic and appealing, powerful, and yet full of pathos, filled the building.

'Lift up thine heart, and join in hymning the Father of All,' so it seemed to Josiah to say to him; yet, being ignorant of music, he was not aware that it was the great master-mind of Mozart in his Twelfth Mass, interpreted by the skilful touch of an understanding disciple, which was calling upon him to join in the '*Gloria in Excelsis.*'

People flocked down the aisles and went out at the open doors; the final chord had been played; a verger moved about extinguishing the lights, and still Josiah lingered, unwilling to go out and

face the cold of the winter's night, and the far more terrible chilliness of being alone and forsaken.

Having stayed as long as he dared, he at length roused himself to go, but was still hesitating in the porch, when he felt a light touch on his arm, and found that it was the preacher who stood beside him.

'Forgive me,' was said, with as true a courtesy as if the poor outcast had been a prince of the blood. 'You seem to be a stranger—at least, I don't know your face; and the countenances of persons coming to my church are generally familiar to me. Are you a new parishioner of mine?'

'No, no;' and Josiah felt at once terribly shy and greatly attracted by the

kindliness of the great man beside him, whose powerful frame, in contrast to his own diminutive one, gave him a pleasant sense of protection.

Doctor Mackenzie, with the quick-sightedness to which constant looking out for those in need of help had trained him, had noticed the youth's slight figure, sunken cheeks and restless eyes, as he was himself about to leave the church; and it at once suggested itself to him, as the 'duty that lay nearest' to minister to this forlorn-looking creature.

A man was standing at the church gate, seemingly waiting for him.

'Good-night, Marley,' said the doctor.

Herbert knowing this meant, that the clergyman of Saint Cross would not walk

home with him that evening, also bade good-night and went on.

A strong inclination seized Josiah to touch his hat and escape, but a sharp fit of coughing, brought on by coming out into the night air, forced him to stand still for a moment.

Doctor Mackenzie seized on this opportunity to say,—

'You seem hardly fit to stay out so late. My house is close by; if you will come in and rest, I think a warm cup of tea might check your coughing fit; and this is our supper hour.'

As if sure of his invitation being accepted, he drew Josiah's feeble arm within his own, and started off at a gentle pace.

Too weak of will or body to resist, the lad let himself be taken into the hospitable dwelling; and once there, though food, warmth, and kind care, partly restored him, he was not allowed to leave again that night.

So began a new epoch in his life.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POET AND THE ORGANIST.

A NE'ER-DO-WELL — a lad who would not work like other lads, who was not always sober, —how very uninteresting! So he would appear to most of us. But to make something even *we* might call interesting out of this unpromising material was the ambition that fired Christopher Mackenzie; and, perchance, it was as noble a one as that which inspired many a

leader of a forlorn hope of a different stamp.

The doctor had no hard and fast rules for dealing with characters; still there was a certain method which he was wont to pursue. He never committed the mistake of seeking to drive a square peg into a round hole, but searched, and searched patiently, till he had discovered in each individual with whom he had to deal, what faculty that person possessed which was most worthy of cultivation; and, in looking for that, he would notice germs so small that most people were sure to overlook them.

Atkinson puzzled him considerably; not that he did not perceive the young man's great abilities, but that he recog-

nised the extreme difficulty of utilising these powers.

An interview with Mr Westcott, and a brief correspondence with Angus Graeme, had proved to him, that the task he was about to take in hand had baffled heads both wise and kindly. Yet all the more it seemed imperative to help this youth for whom life's dawn had been obscured by such lowering clouds. Only, how was this to be done?'

Temporary employment for Josiah was comparatively easy to find; what to do for him as a permanence was a matter for far deeper consideration.

After the kindness received on that Sunday night when they first met, the starveling poet had opened his heart to

the good doctor, unable to resist an impulse to which he was prompted by recognising in him the most sympathising spirit, it had ever been his fortune to meet. And such was Christopher Mackenzie's nature, that one who laid claim to his help was looked upon by him as the person of all others whom he dared not thrust aside.

With his numerous correspondents—for people who had read his books wrote from many lands to consult him on all possible questions—and with a large amount of literary labour to be got through, he was easily able to find employment for a secretary. Mrs Mackenzie's failing health also rendered him less willing to seek her assistance than

formerly, although she never consented entirely to forego a share in the intellectual labours in which she had taken a deep and active interest from the beginning of her married life. To keep Josiah from idleness, and pay him enough wherewith to procure board and lodging, which was all the doctor could afford to do, did not, of course, offer any prospect for the lad's future. Yet to employ, him for a while at least, appeared good, till a way for something better should be opened out, and it became plainer what could be done with this high-strung, eager, inquiring nature, so richly gifted and so much in need of training. Accordingly, my wandering poet became duly installed as

copyist and amanuensis to the clergyman of Saint Cross.

The doctor contrived to set aside some hours a week to read with the young man, and was well repaid by his scholar's aptitude. And Josiah was unquestionably, grateful; nevertheless, it must be confessed that, though happier than he had ever been, and having his time well filled up, he was at times a prey to restlessness. The effects of his past life, made it very hard for him to settle to any routine, and old habits still had a strong hold upon him.

At one moment, his eyes would beam with inspiration, and no flights of genius seemed beyond the grasp of his rich imagination; at another time, he was seized with a deep despondency, when he would

look on existence as worthless, and was in danger of laying violent hands on his own life.

Conscious of the heights to which, with the powers he felt within him, it was possible for him to attain, he had not endurance enough to scale the ladder step by step, but impatiently and unreasonably looked for a short cut to fame.

Such moods cost his kind friend much anxiety.

'Lad,' Christopher Mackenzie would say, 'the noblest race-horse needs training, and we have no reason to suppose you are an exception to the universal rule. Even if we could find you a publisher at present, the reviews would probably overlook your noblest thoughts, whilst merci-

lessly holding your faults of expression, verse-making, and metaphor up to ridicule. It is only the poet with an established reputation, who may take liberties. Be patient for a while, that you may gain a good, classical education. You need lose none of your vigour of language, because people become able to see in you the undoubted gentleman and scholar.'

The saddest times were when, for more than a day at a time, Josiah avoided presenting himself at the Saint Cross parsonage; for then its owner knew that he had yielded to the temptation to drink, and felt ashamed to show himself. Doctor Mackenzie felt sure it was misery, which had led the lad in the first instance to this, and not a natural inclination for low forms

of vice; but the habit once formed was difficult to break loose from, and with each fit of gloom, its terribly enticing power showed itself. Still the doctor believed in the purifying influence of performing 'the duty that lay nearest,' as a panacea even for this; and when Josiah, humbled and shame-faced, returned after such seasons of dissipation, instead of meeting him with reproaches, he would give him work, which was at once dry and requiring of thought, such as the correction of proofs, or the preparation of an index. At the same time, he felt some other outlet to be necessary for this chafed spirit. Mere repression would only gall it into further bitterness. Society of a congenial kind; change of companion-

ship, to be thrown together with one capable of appreciating and drawing out the young man's powers, would do for him what nothing else could. Only the choice of a companion must be made carefully; wisdom, cleverness, humour, a perfect absence of the spirit, either of patronage or of self-assertion, were needful in the individual who was to influence Josiah for good. And in whom were all these qualities to be found?

Casting round in his mind in search of such a being, Doctor Mackenzie's thoughts rested on Herbert Marley, who was undoubtedly at once highly gifted, sympathetic, and free from any love of displaying his gifts. Ah, there was the very man to do the work he contemplated,

and not too old to prevent Josiah's ultimately feeling entirely at home with him. Only, how could the busy organist of the Victoria Hall be expected to take up this additional task?

'I must try, at any rate,' said the doctor to himself. 'This is too serious a matter not to warrant some effort being made concerning it.'

And he spoke to Herbert, who did not feel specially drawn towards cultivating the acquaintance of the doctor's poetical fledgling, but, unwilling to refuse any request of his friend, said he would try his best.

Once aware of what was expected of him, Herbert made a point of lingering for a while in the parsonage library when-

ever he happened to call at the house, that he might exchange a few words with young Atkinson, who was generally to be found there, seated at a table, surrounded by papers and correspondence.

Getting on, seemed uphill work at first. The doctor's secretary was painfully shy and self-conscious, always declaring himself profoundly ignorant on whatever topic Mr Marley introduced, yet secretly forming a warm attachment for this handsome man of noble presence, who treated him with so much friendliness, and ready to idealise him to any amount as the hero of his next epic.

Herbert, who had preserved his early candour and simplicity, had no idea of the effect he created on this youth, who scarcely

looked up from the papers lying before him, and answered his remarks, if at all, with almost inaudible monosyllables. In fact, he grew fairly puzzled and interested, for his frankness generally won people easily, and very soon divested them of their reserve. In days gone by, Mrs Marley had been wont to declare that the most crabbed, morose old people for ten miles round the Priory would smile if Herbert's name were mentioned, though at nothing else. And the darker side of life, and the questions which had perplexed his own soul, had not robbed him of the power of being singularly genial in conversation, though it had lent gravity to his demeanour when silent.

'I am afraid I am making little progress

with Atkinson,' he said, after a while, to Doctor Mackenzie.

'Never mind, it is winter time now, and all the ground is hard frozen,' his friend answered, laughingly. 'You will find he will thaw with the spring.'

And the doctor was not mistaken.

It was a very little circumstance which first broke the ice—nothing more than Herbert's asking Josiah to copy out the parts of an anthem he had composed, and wished to try over with the Saint Cross choir.

'I forgot all about it,' he said, as he passed through the library, 'and to-morrow evening is the practice. Just at present I have my hands full preparing for the musical festival. Could you do this for me, Atkinson?'

'I will try,' answered Josiah, without raising his shy eyes from his writing.

'Thank you. These are the different parts, and I have marked down how many copies of each are needed. And please pay particular attention to the solos.'

Next day Herbert returned. The music had been duly copied, and he took it away with him after a brief word of thanks, and saying, he was late for the practice.

The colour mounted to Josiah's cheeks, which he tried to hide by bending more assiduously than ever over his work. He was disappointed that Mr Marley should not have cast so much as a glance at the copies, on which so much loving care had been bestowed. Perhaps he would dis-

tribute the sheets amongst the choir without looking at them at all.

It was not so, however. As Herbert hurried along to the church, he glanced rapidly over the different parts to see if Atkinson, who was probably new to the occupation, had not made any mistakes. To his surprise, far from needing correction, the copies were of singular beauty, and might have been supposed to be lithographed instead of written out. Bearing this in mind, he again asked Josiah a few days later to do some more copying for him, adding he had never seen anything better done than the first. This time he said he would be much obliged if Josiah would bring the parts to him on the following day at the Victoria Hall, as he would be

busy there, and unable to get away till late in the afternoon.

It was with mixed feelings, but on the whole agreeable ones, that Josiah undertook this errand. He was proud to have something to do for Mr Marley, much pleased at an opportunity of entering the building, to which, as being a temple of music, he felt considerably drawn, though very shy at the prospect of going there alone.

When he reached the Victoria Hall, two or three officials asked him his business, some in a manner more surly than civil, and he felt greatly tempted to turn back; but the magic of Mr Marley's name proved an 'open sesame' to private entrances and passages usually strictly closed to the public.

At length, he found himself in the great man's presence, but unnoticed, for Herbert was seated at the organ playing through his share in the programme for the coming festival. His countenance wore the far-off look customary to it at such times, and a ray of light which fell on his face gave it a transfigured appearance.

It seemed to the searching eyes of the imaginative youth, who stood watching the inspired musician, as if the word 'Peace' stood written in shining letters on his features; the peace, not of a laughing summer's day, but of the calm after the storm.

'Absurd, fanciful!' I fancy I hear someone say. Perhaps so; but, then,

I never declared my young poet guiltless of fancies; on the contrary, with his gifts of imagination, he was full of them—some weird or far-fetched, it may be, and some very beautiful. For he was very much in love with beauty, and *there* lay my hopes of him in spite of all his shortcomings. And this particular fancy, or 'exercise of the imagination,' as some would sarcastically call it—just as if imagination were not a lovely gift, bestowed to be exercised—could scarcely be called a far-fetched one, seeing that it was the natural overflow of Josiah's doubt-tossed heart yearning after peace. What wonder that the eager seeker, seeing, should recognise the treasure he sought after?

Be this as it may be, he did recognise it; and, unconscious of the possibility of being overheard, exclaimed passionately,—

'He has found the part that falls to him in the harmony of life.'

'WHAT?'

Herbert had stopped, and turned his head in the direction whence the words came, but could see no one, as the afternoon was on the wane, and it was already dark under the shadow of the organ, where Josiah stood.

No answer came. The shy poet was recalled to himself, and Herbert, thinking it was the echo of his own thoughts, which had seemed to him like uttered words, murmured dreamily,—

'The harmony of life? Oh, no; I

have scarcely found it. I am only feeling after it. But oh, my Blanche, I begin to bless the "cleansing fire and the furnace of living pain."'

Josiah moved forward: he felt it incumbent on him to do so. No shyness could excuse his trespassing on the inmost secrets of another's life; and go away he must not, for Mr Marley was expecting and would probably wait for him.

'Good evening,' he said, trying to speak with ease. 'Here is the music written out.'

'Ah, Atkinson, thank you. Put it down on that desk, please. I have no doubt, it is as capitally copied as the last. What can I do for you in return,

play you something? That is all a poor musician can do.'

Herbert's countenance had quite regained its usual composed expression.

'Oh, if you really would—'

'If I would? Why not? I shall be very glad to do so. I didn't know you cared for music.'

Then followed a blissful half-hour for Josiah, whilst the Victoria Hall organist played through more of the music for the festival, some wild and brilliant, some slow and tender movements.

After this, Mr Marley proposed to walk home with him; but had first to interview two or three people on business. So Josiah gladly waited in an obscure corner till Mr Marley had suc-

cessively received the tenor, the first violinist, and several members of the orchestra, and declared himself ready to go.

Of course, though Herbert had tried not to show it by word or gesture, it had dawned on him as he turned from the organ keyboard and saw the earnest gaze of Doctor Mackenzie's secretary riveted upon him, that he could not have been without a witness to his reverie; and Josiah's behaviour on the occasion caused a feeling of sympathy towards the humble poet to spring up in his heart.

Josiah, likewise, encouraged by the feeling of a common understanding, awakened by the incident above related, seemed in some measure to have thrown

off his reserve, for as they threaded their way together through the narrow Denesbury streets, he went so far as to address a few remarks to Mr Marley, instead of confining himself to giving monosyllabic answers to what was said to him.

The organist, after referring to the musical festival, and offering Josiah a ticket, had expatiated for a while on the characteristics of different composers in a very pleasant fashion.

Josiah listened with interest, and after a while said,—

'I wish I could play. I think it would soothe and help me as nothing else could.'

'You must learn,' Herbert answered.

'I cannot afford to pay for lessons,' was the simple answer.

'No need for that. I am sure Mrs Mackenzie would teach you the rudiments, and I could help you now and then.'

'Oh, thank you, but I hate being a trouble to people. If I were a musician at all, I think I should like best to play the violin. It is full of pathos and comfort like the human voice; and to be able to speak with power to one's fellow-beings must be a priceless gift,' Josiah responded.

Herbert turned a look of not wholly concealed surprise on the queer, shrunken figure at his side. It was fully light enough in the High Street—Denesbury prided itself on the excellence of its gas—for him to note how plain and diminutive

Josiah was. Certainly, but for the expressiveness of his face, the idea of power of any sort was the last impression Atkinson was likely to convey to most observers. So Herbert mused. Feeling, however, that an answer was expected from him, he said, after an involuntary pause,—

'If not by music, you may be able to speak to people in other ways; I mean by your poetry.'

'Ah, sometimes I dream of such things; then the question of pounds, shillings and pence steps in, and I know it is but idle dreaming. I want both money and influence to get a hearing.'

'Would you let me see some of your compositions?' asked Herbert, feeling sorry for the lad, yet uncertain whether

he were not acting foolishly in making the request, because Doctor Mackenzie had said it was perhaps better for the present to restrain Josiah's eagerness to publish.

'If you like; but it would most likely bore you.'

'No, not that; but I don't know that I can be of much use to you, though I have some literary friends, and might—'

'Even if you could not help me to publish, Mr Marley, a sympathetic listener is already of great use to one, who feels lonely in his aims.'

After this Herbert felt 'in for it' as he expressed it, when relating the circumstance afterwards to his mother, and therefore resigned himself, with as good a grace as he could muster, to the prospect

of being deluged with manuscripts, to be waded through somehow in the first spare hours, available.

In the old days of his connection with 'Veritas,' he had some experience of the importance with which literary aspirants often look upon their crude performances, so was agreeably disappointed by Josiah's answering considerately,—

'I shall be very thankful for any help, and after the spring festival is over, will bring you some things I have written. At present you must be much too busy to have any time for me.'

CHAPTER IX.

A STEP FORWARD.

ONE bright June day, Josiah called at the Cottage, and was received by Mrs Marley with the affability, which she was always known to show to her social inferiors.

The young man felt a thrill of pleasure at finding himself in the presence of so stately a lady, and being accustomed to draw his comparisons from books, of which he knew many, whilst his acquaintance-

ship with people in real life was small, said to himself,—

'So Marie Antoinette or Maria Theresa must have looked in the old days of powder and grand courtesy, both of which seem to have vanished in this prosaic age of railroads and telegraphs and hastening to be rich.'

To him, despite the extreme simplicity of her attire, Mrs Marley's appearance was quite queenly; and his eyes, so far as his bashfulness would permit, dwelt with infinite delight on her well-cut features and the still remarkably symmetrical proportions of her figure, draped in some soft, flowing material.

'My son has gone out with Doctor Mackenzie,' she said, after having taken

Josiah round her garden, and, having shown him her roses, with the pride of a lover of flowers who has watched each tree developing, each bud unfolding. 'And now,' she added, handing him a lovely spray of *Gloire de Dijon*, 'you would, perhaps, like to meet the walkers. They were to go to Earlsmoor, and come home by Denesbury heath. My son wished me to tell you this, if he had not returned before you came. He said, if you felt inclined to stroll down to where the footpath turns off towards Hanley Mill, you might have a quiet time for reading there together. It is a favourite spot both with him and Doctor Mackenzie.'

Accepting this as a dismissal, Josiah took his leave, and wandered off amongst

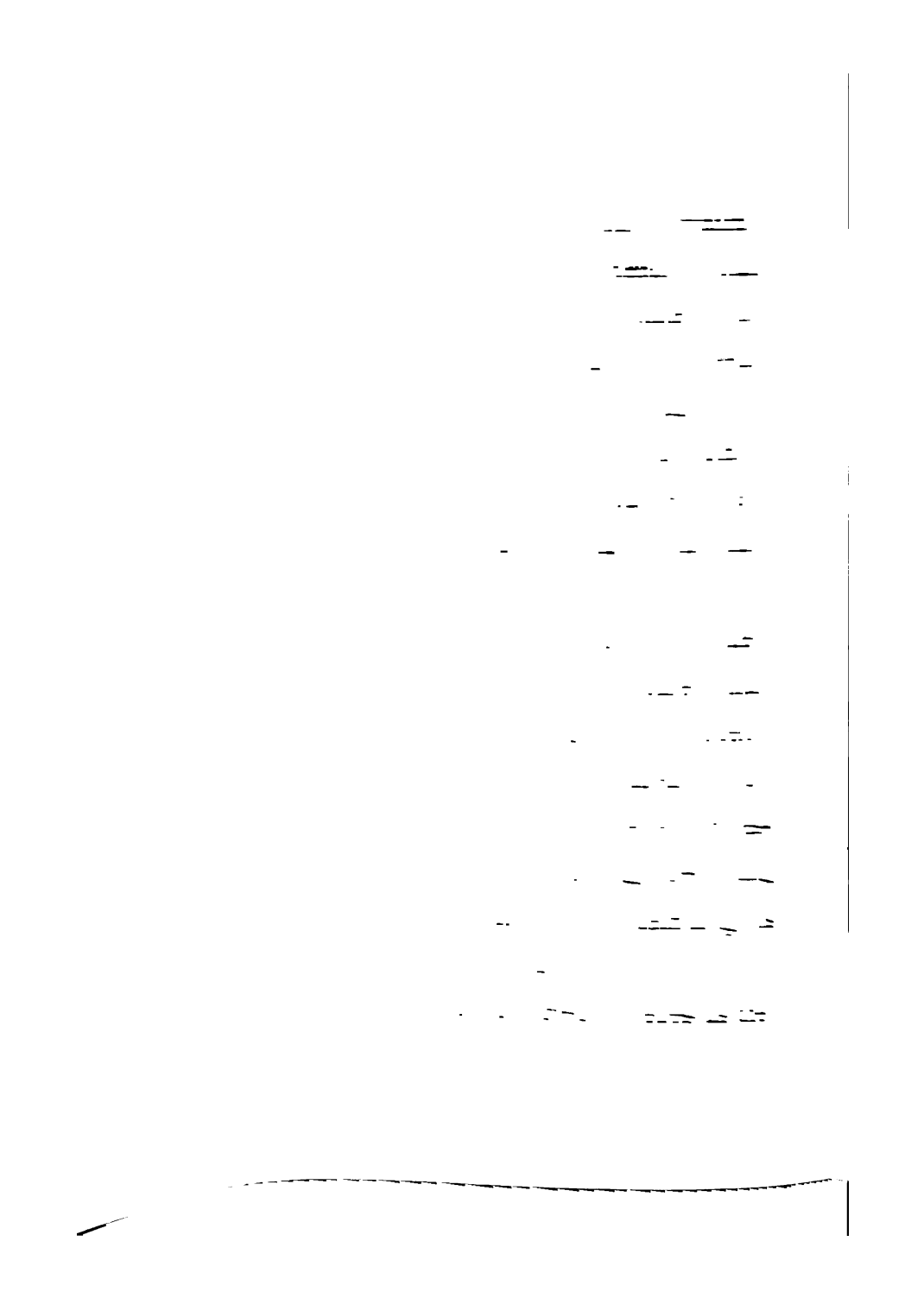
gorse and bracken till he reached the turning to the mill; there he seated himself beneath a clump of Scotch firs, and watched the white tufts of cloud chasing each other across the sky, listened to the whirring noise of insects enjoying the bright summer's day, and entered with a poet's enthusiasm into the wondrous beauties of light and shade.

He sat thus for upwards of half-an-hour, and began to think Mr Marley had forgotten him, when suddenly Blunder was at his side overwhelming him with caresses, with which he would have gladly dispensed, although old age was beginning considerably to allay the good colley's vehemence. Hereupon Doctor Mackenzie's tall figure, wrapped round with a plaid,

came into view, and he cleared the stile which marked the boundary dividing the Hanley property from the main road, with an agility a younger man might have envied. He was closely followed by Herbert, who, with a 'Well done, sir!' was swiftly at his side.

Josiah gave a secret sigh at his own puniness, as he watched the grace of movement possessed by these two men; and the old yearning came over him to be more like others in simple, everyday things.

'I am going to give myself the rare pleasure of calling on Mrs Marley, as I find myself so near the Cottage,' said the doctor, and passed on with a smile, that Herbert and his secretary might be alone together.



sat together beneath the firs on a heather-scented knoll, his voice was melodious, though not powerful, and once absorbed in his subject, he forgot to be bashful.

Once or twice he looked up at the conclusion of a passage to note the expression on Mr Marley's face, but could draw no conclusions from it. Herbert's countenance only bore the look of careful attention.

The sun was already far on its westward road as he finished reading; and Mr Marley said, looking up at the rose-tinted sky,—

'We must be going. My mother will be expecting us to supper. I promised to bring you back with me this evening.'

He rose to go. Josiah did the same,

and they walked along, side by side, in silence. There was something in the stillness of the hour, which hushed all wish for conversation in these two men, both so ready to be influenced by nature's moods.

When, after a while, Herbert spoke again, it was on matters wholly unconnected with poetry and literature.

A pleasant evening followed for Josiah —Mrs Marley and her son vying with each other in seeking to put him at his ease; but of the errand on which he had come, in the first instance, no more was uttered till he bid good-night, when Herbert, following him out, said,—

'If you will trust me with your poems, Atkinson, I will see if anything can be done for you.'

Josiah placed the little bundle in his hands, and went back to his lodgings, not knowing quite what to think about it, whether to feel hopeful or not.

. . . . . .

Amongst Herbert's literary friends of his Oxford days, was a certain Henry Plantagenet, himself a poet of no mean order, and editor of a high-class periodical called the 'Aeon,' in which much good poetry was produced, and verse-making in general freely criticised.

To him Herbert sent young Atkinson's productions, with a warm recommendation for merciful consideration.

'I know,' he wrote, 'that your waste-paper basket is overflowing with the gems of would-be laureates, and that young

authors and their friends are unconscionable in their demands on you; nevertheless, I pri'thee, for old sake's sake, send not my young poet away unheard.'

Henry Plantagenet made a wry face at this request; but being particularly fond of Herbert, who most rarely preferred a petition of any kind to him, condescended to glance over the papers, as he sipped his coffee, and ate curried sausage one morning, in his bachelor quarters.

At first he was disposed to bestow most attention on his breakfast; but a few moments' perusal of the poems sufficed to change all this; and in another minute he had pushed his plate away, run his hand over his curly hair, a sign

that he was decidedly interested, and growled to himself; for, be it confessed, he was gruff, outwardly at least.

'H'm, Marley is no fool. We could put some of this in the "Aeon."'

And he did. What he chose was a sonnet, of which Josiah himself thought little, though it was remarkable for exquisite tenderness and beauty. A poem in several cantos he put aside for further consideration — it was most suitable for publication in book form; and a second, short one, he reserved for future production in the 'Aeon,' in case the first was well received.

In the course of three months, he despatched a note, with enclosed cheque, to Herbert, saying,—

'Your *protégé* has proved a swan, and ought certainly to make his way. If he cares to publish his poem entitled "Perseus" on commission, taking half the profits, Messrs Drewitt & Hatfield, who bring out the "Aeon," would accept it on those terms.'

Truly a pleasant ending to long months of waiting, months in which Josiah had often wondered anxiously if Mr Marley had quite forgotten his literary aspirations, and left his precious manuscripts buried unheeded in some drawer; months, too, that had been hot and monotonous in the empty town; when every one, who could possibly afford it, had taken flight. Even Doctor Mackenzie had managed a visit to Scotland; whilst Mr

Marley and his mother had gone to Germany to hear Wagner's music as rendered in the Fatherland, and to meet Sir William Challenger and some of his daughters at Homburg.

July and August had been stifling in close, smoky Denesbury, where factory smoke often hid the beauties of the summer sky; and, our Yorkshireman's country bringing-up asserted itself so far as to make him think, even a visit to his father's farm and a turn at pig-keeping might be preferable to sojourning in the atmosphere of such a town.

He had few acquaintances, and no companion to make recreation hours pleasant to him. It was, therefore, all the more to his credit that he stuck

steadily to the work given him by Doctor Mackenzie, and kept free alike from fits of melancholy and drink, only allowing himself the occasional relaxation of a stroll across Denesbury heath, and an hour spent with a book beneath the Scotch firs, near Hanley Mill.

Success is generally supposed to be liable to turn people's heads, and above all those of persons to whom it comes suddenly, after a long run of ill-luck. It did not do so to Josiah. On the contrary, such an acknowledgment of the worth of his work, as the letter from the editor of the 'Aeon' brought, was what he particularly wanted; ground for more self-confidence was needful to increase his self-respect, and also to augment the intrinsic

value of his compositions; for to produce hearty work of any description, when the probability of its ever being of use seems very doubtful, is well-nigh an impossibility. We have an extreme illustration of this in the fact, that giving malefactors compulsory employment, of a kind which they know is of no avail to any one, adds greatly to their hopelessness and sense of punishment.

The truth, that possession brings further gain, was also brought home to Josiah in a very pleasant fashion.

Young Atkinson, Doctor Mackenzie's secretary, a lad who had been discharged from Westcotts', was nobody.

The successful author of a sonnet in the Aeon,' and of a volume of poems published

by so old-established a firm as Drewitt & Hatfield; a poet, in short, whom the leading critical journals considered worthy of columns of praise or blame—that man was, undoubtedly, somebody.

When the London press took him up, Denesbury would not be thought behindhand; and the 'Chronicle' and 'Advertiser,' representing, respectively, the Liberal and Conservative interests, and generally taking opposite views on all subjects, on principle, vied with each other in eulogising the local genius. 'What We Think,' the little Radical halfpenny-worth, also let its voice be heard, and devoted a lengthy paragraph to a sketch of the young poet's career, which was, of course, somewhat apocryphal in its nature, and written with

the double intention of exciting interest, and pointing out that the highest gifts were almost always to be found amongst the lowest of the people; so that, when a 'bloated aristocracy' had ceased to cumber the soil, an abundant harvest of native talent would spring up, bearing yet more emphatic witness to the pernicious repressiveness, resulting from every remnant of feudalism.

For the purpose of bringing out this moral vividly, it had been necessary considerably to embellish Josiah's history, attributing to him many and wonderful adventures, at the account of which no one would have been more surprised than himself. Besides, it was of course impossible that his story should be given accurately,

seeing Doctor Mackenzie and Mr Westcott were the only people in Denesbury who knew it; and that neither gentleman was likely to furnish the writers for 'What We Think' with the necessary information.

Finding himself appreciated, Josiah began to feel above contributing poems to obscure country newspapers; and the sentiment was pardonable. At the same time, he knew he must be ready to write for periodicals of far less importance than the 'Aeon,' if he wished to earn his living. Poets, even of acknowledged merit, were sufficiently plentiful, for him to know that there were many competitors with whom to contend for public favour, and therefore he was perfectly willing, to respond to a request to compose a poem for a Christ-

mas Annual, published at the office of the 'Denesbury Chronicle.' Of course it had to be something appropriate to the season, and he called it 'THE GIFT OF THE MESSENGERS.' A quaint fancy, very gracefully expressed, and clothed in the form of an ancient legend; in reality partly based on one, and partly the outcome of his imagination.

The story told how, on the first Christmas night, when the angelic choirs had hymned their message of peace and goodwill, some notes of the lovely music took shape, and, wafted by the breezes, were scattered abroad amongst the children of men; and that, since then, although humanity was ignorant of the reason, yet amongst high and low alike, wherever

beautiful lives gave forth their strains of holy music, there the angels' gifts had been received, as a precious heritage of many generations.

In the concluding lines, the poet pointed out how divine a result was produced by the harmonious blending of two or more of these glorious fragments, if the just proportions of each were but preserved, and no note, deep or high, sounded forth to the detriment of its feilows, just as if its owner believed himself, the sole possessor of aught worthy of a hearing.

That there were errors in this composition, was beyond dispute. It is no difficult matter to find fault with the way, in which a young writer may handle his subject, even though the sacred fire of

genius has touched and consecrated his lips. And so, in this case, there were undoubted faults, and plenty of people to criticise them. Doctor Mackenzie, himself no mean poet, could discover them unassisted, and what is more, pointed them out to Josiah; in short, discussed the poem's merits and demerits with him, without warping his judgment by making use of the envenomed condemnation or fulsome praise, with which less conscientious critics were lavishly ready. And at heart the good doctor rejoiced greatly when he considered the substance of 'THE GIFT OF THE MESSENGERS,' because it told him his *protégé* must have made some way in overcoming temptation and discerning spiritual things, to be capable of such

noble conceptions. For, he held most firmly, that there are forms of knowledge which come only of doing the right, and which no mere power of intuitive thought can evolve out of any man's heart, be his poetic faculties ever so great.

But for the sake of the reader, who perhaps does not feel so keen an interest in the young Yorkshireman, to whose history the last few chapters have been devoted, let us dwell no longer on his poem. It is enough to say that it was a nine day's wonder to Denesbury, read even by the representative of Mrs Grundy, who had worked so hard to oust Doctor Mackenzie from the living of Saint Cross, and that the dean himself condescended to peruse and commend it.

Josiah had now lived over a year in Denesbury, whilst his friend, Mr Marley, had already held the post of organist at the Victoria Hall for five years, and Doctor Mackenzie had been in charge of the parish of Saint Cross during four times twelve months. Fortunately, it can be said for the young poet that, from the time when he received the first encouragement from the press, the acknowledgment of his gifts gradually, but steadily, deepened in him the desire to make the best of them by persevering effort, and to withdraw himself from the pernicious influence of all dissipation, calculated to cause his genius to be practically thrown away. It was a supremely difficult task. The temptations which beset a highly-strung

and yet morbid disposition such as his was, are hard to realise; and so we seldom make allowances for them. Thus, it comes to pass that comparatively ignoble natures often sit in scornful judgment on nobler, but more easily assailable ones. How little we take count of the dangers into which keen sensibilities may lead; though they can also, if rightly trained, bestow wondrous powers of insight and sympathy on their possessor. The dangers, too, which beset the path of one to whom sublime or graceful conceptions come easily, and who may therefore readily fall into the snare of being a carpet-warrior, with sword rusting in scabbard, content to dream instead of do great deeds; how little we acknowledge of them!

Yet that they are great, and by no means rare, a glance at the lives of many utterers of melodious words, would soon suffice to show. And though their very gifts, placing them on a pinnacle above their fellows, may also give rise to their imperfections, being laid more bare, we can but sigh over the slurred record of many a life wrecked by dissipation, which might have been so different had the man who lived it feared, with St Paul, lest teaching others, he 'himself should be a castaway.'

Grapes from thorns, figs from thistles, lovely words from lips unclean, our deepest feelings revolt at them; we say 'they cannot be.'

And yet does not experience belie this? What strange paradox lies here? To

find an explanation in part of this seeming contradiction, we must bear in mind that there is possibly more unstableness and weakness than actual villany and depravity amongst men.

Let us, however, cease this minor wail of moralising, and strike a cheerful chord, by briefly dwelling on our poet's onward progress, before bringing this chapter in his history to a close.

Fresh literary openings awaited him; the 'Denesbury Chronicle' required some one to write occasional papers for it, and, on Doctor Mackenzie's advice, Josiah accepted the office.

Mrs Mackenzie had, kindly and perseveringly, instructed him in the rudiments of music, and when money began to flow

into his pockets, one of his first outlays was to buy a violin, and procure lessons from the first violinist of the Victoria Hall. His poetical nature helped him much in the understanding of music, though he found that, for him as for everyone else, there could be no royal road to personal proficiency—the laborious way of many exercises and constant practising, being the only one for all. Still, he persevered, though not able to devote very much time to it, and being often angrily requested to be silent by a sleepy fellow-lodger, when going over his lessons till a late hour of the night.

It seemed likely that years would elapse ere he could make his mark as a violinist, if, indeed, that ever should be, seeing that

to become one, an early beginning is almost a *sine qua non.* But even the little he could achieve helped him personally; and his theoretical knowledge increased far more rapidly.

Once Mr Marley saw how good music affected Josiah, he let no opportunity slip of inviting him to hear it, and drawing him out on the subject afterwards. In this wise, the youth's taste was given unusual opportunities of cultivation, the result being that he was soon able to give an intelligent opinion on what he had heard, and the 'Chronicle' became indebted to him for talented accounts and critiques of musical doings at the Victoria Hall.

With this taste in common, his friend-

ship with Herbert Marley grew, bringing its benefits to both; for all friendships must bring some to each, though the shares may be unequally divided.

And there came for them those days of quiet well-being, too uneventful to possess much worthy of record for others, but leaving their softening, hallowing influence on the lives to which they are given.

END OF VOL. II.

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